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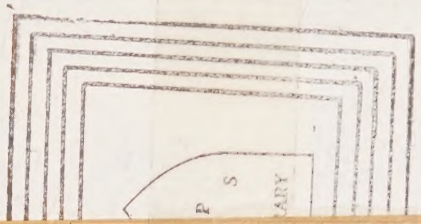
OF

ENGLISH LITERATURE

EDITED BY PROFESSOR HALES

THE AGE OF POPE



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THE AGE OF POPE

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THE AGE OF POPE

(1700-1744)

BY

JOHN DENNIS

AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN ENGLISH LITERATURE" ETC.

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PREFACE.

The *Age of Pope* is designed to form one of a series of Handbooks, edited by Professor Hales, which it is hoped will be of service to students who love literature for its own sake, instead of regarding it merely as a branch of knowledge required by examiners. The period covered by this volume, which has had the great advantage of Professor Hales's personal care and revision, may be described roughly as lying between 1700, the year in which Dryden died, and 1744, the date of Pope's death.

I believe that no work of the class will be of real value which gives what may be called literary statistics, and has nothing more to offer. Historical facts and figures have their uses, and are, indeed, indispensable; but it is possible to gain the most accurate knowledge of a literary period and to be totally unimpressed by the influences which a love of literature inspires. The first object of a guide is to give accurate information; his second and larger object is to direct the reader's steps through a country exhaustless in variety and interest. If once a passion be awakened for the study of our noble literature the student will learn to reject what is meretricious, and will turn instinctively to

what is worthiest. In the pursuit he may leave his guide far behind him; but none the less will he be grateful to the pioneer who started him on his travels.

If the *Age of Pope* proves of help in this way the wishes of the writer will be satisfied. It has been my endeavour in all cases to acknowledge the debt I owe to the authors who have made this period their study; but it is possible that a familiar acquaintance with their writings may have led me occasionally to mistake the matter thus assimilated for original criticism. If, therefore—to quote the phrase of Pope's enemy and my namesake—I have sometimes borrowed another man's 'thunder,' the fault of having 'made a sinner of my memory' may prove the reader's gain, and will, I hope, be forgiven.

J. D.

HAMPSTEAD,
August, 1894.

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THE AGE OF POPE.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

THE death of John Dryden, on the first of May, 1700, closed a period of no small significance in the history of English literature. His faults were many, both as a man and as a poet, but he belongs to the race of the giants, and the impress of greatness is stamped upon his works. No student of Dryden can fail to mark the force and sweep of an intellect impatient of restraint. His 'long-resounding march' reminds us of a turbulent river that overflows its banks, and if order and perfection of art are sometimes wanting in his verse, there is never the lack of power. Unfortunately many of the best years of his life were devoted to a craft in which he was working against the grain. His dramas, with one or two noble exceptions, are comparative failures, and in them he too often

'Profaned the God-given strength, and marred the lofty line.'

In two prominent respects his influence on his successors is of no slight significance. As a satirist Pope acknowledged the master he was unable to excel, and so did many of the eighteenth century versemen, who appear to have looked upon satire as the beginning and the end of poetry. Moreover Dryden may be regarded, without much

exaggeration, as the father of modern prose. Nothing can be more lucid than his style, which is at once bright and strong, idiomatic and direct. He knows precisely what he has to say, and says it in the simplest words. It is the form and not the substance of Dryden's prose to which attention is drawn here. There is a splendour of imagery, a largeness of thought, and a grasp of language in the prose of Hooker, of Jeremy Taylor, and of Milton which is beyond the reach of Dryden, but he has the merit of using a simple form of English free from prolonged periods and classical constructions, and fitted therefore for common use. The wealthy baggage of the prose Elizabethans and their immediate successors was too cumbersome for ordinary travel; Dryden's riches are less massive, but they can be easily carried, and are always ready for service.

In these respects he is the literary herald of a century which, in the earlier half at least, is remarkable in the use it makes of our mother tongue for the exercise of common sense. The Revolution of 1688 produced a change in English politics scarcely more remarkable than the change that took place a little later in English literature and is to be seen in the poets and wits who are known familiarly as the Queen Anne men. It will be obvious to the most superficial student that the gulf which separates the literary period, closing with the death of Milton in 1674, from the first half of the eighteenth century, is infinitely wider than that which divides us from the splendid band of poets and prose writers who made the first twenty years of the present century so famous. There is, for example, scarcely more than fifty years between the publication of Herrick's *Hesperides* and of Addison's *Campaign*, between the *Holy Living* of Taylor and the *Tatler* of Steele, and less than fifty years between *Samson Agonistes*, which Bishop Atterbury asked Pope to polish, and the poems of Prior.

Yet in that short space not only is the form of verse changed but also the spirit.

Speaking broadly, and allowing for exceptions, the literary merits of the Queen Anne time are due to invention, fancy, and wit, to a genius for satire exhibited in verse and prose, to a regard for correctness of form and to the sensitive avoidance of extremes. The poets of the period are for the most part without enthusiasm, without passion, and without the 'fine madness' which, as Drayton says, should possess a poet's brain. Wit takes precedence of imagination, nature is concealed by artifice, and the delight afforded by these writers is not due to imaginative sensibility. Not even in the consummate genius of Pope is there aught of the magical charm which fascinates us in a Wordsworth and a Keats, in a Coleridge and a Shelley. The prose of the age, masterly though it be, stands also on a comparatively low level. There is much in it to attract, but little to inspire.

The difference between the Elizabethan and Jacobean authors, and the authors of the Queen Anne period cannot be accounted for by any single cause. The student will observe that while the inspiration is less, the technical skill is greater. There are passages in Addison which no seventeenth century author could have written; there are couplets in Pope beyond the reach of Cowley, and that even Dryden could not rival. In these respects the eighteenth century was indebted to the growing influence of French literature, to which the taste of Charles II. had in some degree contributed. One notable expression of this taste may be seen in the tragedies in rhyme that were for a time in vogue, of which the plots were borrowed from French romances. These colossal fictions, stupendous in length and heroic in style, delighted the young English ladies of the seventeenth century, and were not out of favour in the eighteenth,

for Pope gave a copy of the *Grand Cyrus* to Martha Blount.

The return, as in Addison's *Cato*, to the classical unities, so faithfully preserved in the French drama, was another indication of an influence from which our literature has never been wholly free. That importations so alien to the spirit of English poetry should tend to the degeneration of the national drama was inevitable. For a time, however, the study of French models, both in the drama and in other departments of literature, may have been productive of benefit. Frenchmen knew before we did, how to say what they wanted to say in a lucid style. Dryden, who was open to every kind of influence, bad as well as good, caught a little of their fine tact and consummate workmanship without lessening his own originality; so also did Pope, who, if he was considerably indebted to Boileau, infinitely excelled him. That, in M. Taine's judgment, would have been no great difficulty. 'In Boileau,' he writes, 'there are, as a rule, two kinds of verse, as was said by a man of wit (M Guillaume Guizot); most of which seem to be those of a sharp school-boy in the third class; the rest those of a good school-boy in the upper division.' And Mr. Swinburne, who holds a similar opinion of the famous French critic's merit, observes, that while Pope is the finest, Boileau is 'the dullest craftsman of their age and school.'[1]

With the author of the *Lutrin* Addison, unlike Pope, was

[1] M. Sainte-Beuve, the greatest of French critics, frankly acknowledges his indebtedness to Boileau, whom he styles Louis the Fourteenth's 'Contrôleur Général du Parnasse.' 'S'il m'est permis de parler pour moi-même,' he writes, 'Boileau est un des hommes qui m'ont le plus occupé depuis que je fais de la critique, et avec qui j'ai le plus vécu en idée.'—*Causeries du Lundi*, tome sixième, p. 495.

personally acquainted. Boileau praised his Latin verses, and although his range was limited, like that of all critics lacking imagination, Addison, then a comparatively youthful scholar, was no doubt flattered by his compliments and learnt some lessons in his school. Prior, who acquired a mastery of the language, was also sensitive to French influence, and shows how it affected him by irony and satire. It would be difficult to estimate with any measure of accuracy the effect of French literature on the Queen Anne authors. There is no question that they were considerably attracted by it, but its sway was, I think, never strong enough to produce mere imitative art. While the most illustrious of these men acknowledged some measure of fealty to our 'sweet enemy France,' they were not enslaved by her, and French literature was but one of several influences which affected the literary character of the age. If Englishmen owed a debt to France the obligation was reciprocal. Voltaire affords a prominent illustration of the power wielded by our literature. He imitated Addison, he imitated, or caught suggestions from Swift, he borrowed largely from Vanbrugh, and although, in his judgment of English authors, he made many critical blunders, they were due to a want of taste rather than to a want of knowledge.

A striking contrast will be seen between the position of literary men in the reign of Queen Anne and under her Hanoverian successors. Literature was not thriving in the healthiest of ways in the earlier period, but from the commercial point of view it was singularly prosperous. Through its means men like Addison and Prior rose to some of the highest offices in the service of their country. Tickell became Under-Secretary of State. Steele held three or four official posts, and if he did not prosper like some men of less mark, had no one but himself to blame. Rowe, the author

of the *Fair Penitent*, was for three years of Anne's reign Under-Secretary, and John Hughes, the friend of Addison, who is poet enough to have had his story told by Johnson, had 'a situation of great profit' as Secretary to the Commissions of the Peace. Prizes of greater or less value fell to some men whose abilities were not more than respectable, but under Walpole and the monarch whom he served literature was disregarded, and the Minister was content to make use of hireling writers for whatever dirty work he required; spending in this way, it is said, £50,000 in ten years.

It was far better in the long run for men of letters to be free from the servility of patronage, but there was a wearisome time, as Johnson and Goldsmith knew to their cost, during which authors lost their freedom in another way, and became the slaves of the booksellers. It is pleasant to observe that the last noteworthy act of patronage in the century was one that did honour to the patron without lessening the dignity and independence of the recipient. Literature owes much to the noblest of political philosophers for discovering and fostering the genius of one of the most original of English poets, and every reader of Crabbe will do honour to the generous friendship of Edmund Burke.

II.

The lowest stage in our national history was reached in the Restoration period. The idealists, who had aimed at marks it was not given to man to reach, were superseded by men with no ideal, whether in politics or religion. The extreme rigidity in morals enjoined by State authority in Cromwell's days, when theological pedantry discovered sin in what had hitherto been regarded as innocent, led, among

the unsaintly mass of the people, to a hypocrisy even more corrupting than open vice, and the advent of the most publicly dissolute of English kings opened the floodgates of iniquity. The unbridled vice of the time is displayed in the Restoration dramatists, in the Grammont memoirs, in the diary of Pepys, and also in that of the admirable John Evelyn, 'faithful among the faithless.' Charles II. was considered good-natured because his manners, unlike those of his father, were sociable, and unrestrained by Court etiquette. Londoners liked a monarch who fed ducks in St. James's Park before breakfast; but an easy temper did not prevent the king from sanctioning the most unjust and cruel laws, and it allowed him to sell Dunkirk and basely to accept a pension from France. The corruption of the age pervaded politics as well as society, and the self-sacrificing spirit which is the salt of a nation's life seemed for the time extinct among public men.

When Dutch men-of-war appeared at the Nore the confusion was great, but there were few resources and few signs of energy in the men to whom the people looked for guidance. A man conversant with affairs expressed to Pepys his opinion that nothing could be done with 'a lazy Prince, no Council, no money, no reputation at home or abroad,' and Pepys also gives the damning statement which is in harmony with all we know of the king, that he 'took ten times more care and pains in making friends between my Lady Castlemaine and Mrs. Stewart, when they have fallen out, than ever he did to save his kingdom.'

There was nothing in the brief reign of James, a reign for ever made infamous by the atrocious cruelty of Jeffreys, that calls for comment here, but the Revolution, despite the undoubted advantages it brought with it, among which must be mentioned the abolition of the censorship of the press, brought also an element of discord and of poli-

tical degradation. The change was a good one for the country, but it caused a large number of influential men to renounce on oath opinions which they secretly held, and it led, as every reader of history knows, to an unparalleled amount of double-dealing on the part of statesmen, which began with the accession of William and Mary and did not end until the last hopes of the Jacobites were defeated in 1746. The loss of principle among statesmen, and the bitterness of faction, which seemed to increase in proportion as the patriotic spirit declined, had a baleful influence on the latter days of the seventeenth century and on the entire period covered by the age of Pope. The low tone of the age is to be seen in the almost universal corruption which prevailed, in the scandalous tergiversation of Bolingbroke, and in the contempt for political principle openly avowed by Walpole, who, as Mr. Lecky observes, 'was altogether incapable of appreciating as an element of political calculation the force which moral sentiments exercise upon mankind." [1]

The enthusiasm and strong passions of the first half of the seventeenth century, which had been crushed by the Restoration, were exchanged for a state of apathy that led to self-seeking in politics and to scepticism in religion. There was a strong profession of morality in words, but in conduct the most open immorality prevailed. Virtue was commended in the bulk of the churches, while Christianity, which gives a new life and aim to virtue, was practically ignored, and the principles of the Deists, whose opinions occupied much attention at the time, were scarcely more alien to the Christian revelation than the views often advocated in the national pulpits. The religion of Christ seems to have been regarded as little more than a useful kind of cement which held society together. The good sense

[1] Lecky's *England*, vol. i. p. 373.

advocated so constantly by Pope in poetry was also considered the principal requisite in the pulpit, and the careful avoidance of religious emotion in the earlier years of the century led to the fervid and too often ill-regulated enthusiasm that prevailed in the days of Whitefield and Wesley. At the same time there appears to have been no lack of religious controversy. 'The Church in danger' was a strong cry then, as it is still. The enormous excitement caused in 1709 by Sacheverell's sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral advocating passive obedience, denouncing toleration, and aspersing the Revolution settlement, forms a striking chapter in the reign of Queen Anne. Extraordinary interest was also felt in the Bangorian controversy raised by Bishop Hoadly, who, in a sermon preached before the king (1717), took a latitudinarian view of episcopal authority, and objected to the entire system of the High Church party.

Queen Caroline, whose keen intellect was allied to a coarseness which makes her a representative of the age, was considerably attracted by theological discussion. She obtained a bishopric for Berkeley, recommended Walpole to read Butler's *Analogy*, which was at one time her daily companion at the breakfast-table, and made the preferment of its author one of her last requests to the king. She liked well to reason with Dr. Samuel Clarke, 'of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate,' and wished to make him Archbishop of Canterbury, but was told that he was not sufficiently orthodox. Theology was not disregarded under the first and second Georges; it was only religion that had fallen into disrepute. The law itself was calculated to excite contempt for the most solemn of religious services. 'I was early,' Swift writes to Stella, 'with the Secretary (Bolingbroke), but he was gone to his devotions and to receive the sacrament. Several rakes did the same. It was not for

piety, but for employment, according to Act of Parliament.'

A glance at some additional features in the social condition of the age will enable us to understand better the character of its literature.

III.

It is a platitude to say that authors are as much affected as other men by the atmosphere which they breathe. Now and then a consummate man of genius seems to stand so much above his age as for all high purposes of art to be untouched by it. Like Milton as a poet, though not as a prose writer, his 'soul is like a star and dwells apart;' but in general, imaginative writers, are intensely affected by the society from which they draw many of their intellectual resources. In the so-called 'Augustan age'[1] this influence would have been felt more strongly than in ours, since the range of men of letters was generally restricted to what was called the Town. They wrote for the critics in the coffee-houses, for the noblemen from whom they expected patronage, and for the political party they were pledged to support.

England during the first half of the eighteenth century was in many respects uncivilized. London was at that time separated from the country by roads that were often impassable and always dangerous. Travellers had to protect themselves as they best could from the attacks of highwaymen, who infested every thoroughfare leading from the metropolis, while the narrow area of the city was

[1] The epithet is used in the Preface to the First Edition of Waller's *Posthumous Poems*, which Mr. Gosse believes was written by Atterbury, and he considers that this is the original occurrence of the phrase.—*From Shakespeare to Pope*, p. 248.

guarded by watchmen scarcely better fitted for its protection than Dogberry and Verges. Readers of the *Spectator* will remember how when Sir Roger de Coverley went to the play, his servants 'provided themselves with good oaken plants' to protect their master from the Mohocks, a set of dissolute young men, who, for sheer amusement, inflicted the most terrible punishments on their victims. Swift tells Stella how he came home early from his walk in the Park to avoid 'a race of rakes that play the devil about this town every night, and slit people's noses,' and he adds, as if party were at the root of every mischief in the country, that they were all Whigs. 'Who has not trembled at the Mohock's name?' is Gay's exclamation in his *Trivia;* and in that curious poem he also warns the citizens not to venture across Lincoln's Inn Fields in the evening. Colley Cibber's brazen-faced daughter, Mrs. Charke, in the *Narrative* of her life, describes also with sufficient precision the dangers of London after dark.

The infliction of personal injury was not confined to the desperadoes of the streets. Men of letters were in danger of chastisement from the poets or politicians whom they criticised or vilified. De Foe often mentions attempts upon his person. Pope, too, was threatened with a rod by Ambrose Philips, which was hung up for his chastisement in Button's Coffee-house; and at a later period, when his satires had stirred up a nest of hornets, the poet was in the habit of carrying pistols, and taking a large dog for his companion when walking out at Twickenham.

Weddings within the liberties of the Fleet by sham clergymen, or clergymen confined for debt, were the source of numberless evils. Every kind of deception was practised, and the victims once in the clutches of their reverend captors had to pay heavily for the illegal ceremony. Ladies were trepanned into matrimony, and Smollett in his *History*

observes, that the Fleet parsons encouraged every kind of villainy. It is astonishing that so great an evil in the heart of London should have been allowed to exist so long, and it was not until the Marriage Act of Lord Hardwicke in 1753, which required the publication of banns, that the Fleet marriages ceased. On the day before the Act came into operation three hundred marriages are said to have taken place.[1]

Marriages of a more lawful kind were generally conducted on business principles. Young women were expected to accept the husband selected for them by their parents or guardians, and the main object considered was to gain a good settlement. It was for this that Mary Granville, who is better known as Mrs. Delany, was sacrificed at seventeen to a gouty old man of sixty, and when he died she was expected to marry again with the same object in view. Mrs. Delany detested, with good cause, the commercial estimate of matrimony. Writing, in 1739, to Lady Throckmorton, she says, 'Miss Campbell is to be married to-morrow to my Lord Bruce. Her father can give her no fortune; she is very pretty, modest, well-behaved, and just eighteen, has two thousand a year jointure, and four hundred pin-money; *they say* he is cross, covetous, and threescore years old, and this unsuitable match is the *admiration of the old and the envy of the young!* For my part I *pity her*, for if she has any notion of social pleasures that arise from true esteem and sensible conversation, how miserable must she be.'[2]

Girls dowered with beauty or with fortune were not always suffered to marry in this humdrum fashion. Ab-

[1] Messrs. Besant and Rice's novel, *The Chaplain of the Fleet*, gives a vivid picture of the life led in the Fleet, and also of the period.

[2] *Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany*, vol. ii. p. 55.

duction was by no means an imaginary peril. Mrs. Delany tells the story of a lady in Ireland, from whom she received the relation, who was entrapped in her uncle's house, carried off by four men in masks, and treated in the most brutal manner. And in 1711 the Duke of Newcastle, having become acquainted with a design for carrying off his daughter by force, was compelled to ask for a guard of dragoons.

Duelling, against which Steele, De Foe, and Fielding inveighed with courage and good sense, was a danger to which every gentleman was liable who wore a sword. Bullies were ready to provoke a quarrel, the slightest cause of offence was magnified into an affair of honour, and the lives of several of the most distinguished men of the century were imperilled in this way. 'A gentleman,' Lord Chesterfield writes, 'is every man who, with a tolerable suit of clothes, a sword by his side, and a watch and snuff-box in his pockets, asserts himself to be a gentleman, swears with energy that he will be treated as such, and that he will cut the throat of any man who presumes to say the contrary.'

The foolish and evil custom died out slowly in this kingdom. Even a great moralist like Dr. Johnson had something to say in its defence, and Sir Walter Scott, who might well have laughed to scorn any imputation of cowardice, was prepared to accept a challenge in his old age for a statement he had made in his *Life of Napoleon*.

Ladies had a different but equally doubtful mode of asserting their gentility. On one occasion the Duchess of Marlborough called on a lawyer without leaving her name. 'I could not make out who she was,' said the clerk afterwards, 'but she swore so dreadfully that she must be a lady of quality.'

There was a fashion which our wits followed at this

time that was not of English growth, namely, the tone of gallantry in which they addressed ladies, no matter whether single or married. Their compliments seemed like downright love-making, and that frequently of a coarse kind, but such expressions meant nothing, and were understood to be a mere exercise of skill. Pope used them in writing to Judith Cowper, whom he professes to worship as much as any female saint in heaven; and in much ampler measure when addressing Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, but neither lady would have taken this amatory politeness seriously. Thus he writes after an evening spent in Lady Mary's society: 'Books have lost their effect upon me; and I was convinced since I saw you, that there is something more powerful than philosophy, and since I heard you, that there is one alive wiser than all the sages.' He tells her that he hates all other women for her sake; that none but her guardian angels can have her more constantly in mind; and that the sun has more reason to be proud of raising her spirits 'than of raising all the plants and ripening all the minerals in the earth.' He will fly to her in Italy at the least notice and 'from thence,' he adds, 'how far you might draw me and I might run after you, I no more know than the spouse in the song of Solomon.'

This was the foible of an age in which women were addressed as though they were totally devoid of understanding; and Pope, as might have been expected, carried the folly to excess.

Against another French custom Addison protests in the *Spectator*, namely, that of women of rank receiving gentlemen visitors in their bedrooms. He objects also to other foreign habits introduced by 'travelled ladies,' and fears that the peace, however much to be desired, may cause the importation of a number of French fopperies. But the proneness to follow the lead of France in matters of

fashion is a folly not confined to the belles and beaux of the last century.

If a chivalric regard for women be an indication of high civilization, that sign is but faintly visible in the reigns of Anne and of the first Georges. Sir Richard Steele paid a noble tribute to Lady Elizabeth Hastings when he said that to know her was a liberal education, but his contemporaries usually treat women as pretty triflers, better fitted to amuse men than to elevate them. Young takes this view in his *Satires:*

> 'Ladies supreme among amusements reign;
> By nature born to soothe and entertain.
> Their prudence in a share of folly lies;
> Why will they be so weak as to be wise?'

and Chesterfield, writing to his son, treats women with similar contempt. . . . 'A man of sense,' he says, 'only trifles with them, plays with them, humours and flatters them as he does with a sprightly, forward child; but he neither consults them about, nor trusts them with, serious matters, though he often makes them believe that he does both, which is the thing in the world that they are proud of. . . . No flattery is either too high or too low for them. They will greedily swallow the highest and gratefully accept of the lowest.'

Nearly twenty years passed, and then Chesterfield wrote in the same contemptuous way of women in a letter to his godson, a 'dear little boy' of ten.

'In company every woman is every man's superior, and must be addressed with respect, nay, more, with flattery, and you need not fear making it too strong . . . it will be greedily swallowed.'

Even Addison, while trying to instruct the 'Fair Sex' as he likes to call them, apparently regarded its members as an inferior order of beings. He delights to dwell upon

their foibles, on their dress, and on the thousand little artifices practised by the flirt and the coquette. Here is the view the Queen Anne moralist takes of the 'female world' he was so eager to improve:

'I have often thought there has not been sufficient pains in finding out proper employments and diversions for the fair ones. Their amusements seem contrived for them, rather as they are women, than as they are reasonable creatures; and are more adapted to the sex than to the species. The toilet is their great scene of business, and the right adjustment of their hair the principal employment of their lives. The sorting of a suit of ribands is considered a very good morning's work; and if they make an excursion to a mercer's or a toy-shop, so great a fatigue makes them unfit for anything else all the day after. Their more serious occupations are sewing and embroidery, and their greatest drudgery the preparations of jellies and sweetmeats. This I say is the state of ordinary women; though I know there are multitudes of those that move in an exalted sphere of knowledge and virtue, that join all the beauties of the mind to the ornaments of dress, and inspire a kind of awe and respect as well as of love into their male beholders.'

The qualification made at the end of this description does not greatly lessen the significance of the earlier portion, which is Addison's picture, as he is careful to tell us of 'ordinary women.' Much must be allowed for the exaggeration of a humourist, but the frivolity of women is a theme upon which Addison harps continually. Indeed, were it not for this weakness in the 'feminine world' half his vocation as a moralist in the *Spectator* would be gone, and if the general estimate in his Essays of the women with whom he was acquainted be to any extent a correct one, the derogatory language used by men of letters, and

especially by Swift, Prior, Pope, and Chesterfield may be almost forgiven.

It was the aim of Addison and Steele to represent, and in some degree to caricature, the follies of fashionable life in the Town. That life had also its vices, which, if less unblushingly displayed than under the 'merry Monarch,' were visible enough. 'In the eighteenth century,' says Victor Hugo, in his epigrammatic way, 'the wife bolts out her husband. She shuts herself up in Eden with Satan. Adam is left outside.'

Drunkenness was a habit familiar to the fine gentlemen of the town and to men occupying the highest position in the State. Harley went more than once into the queen's presence in a half-intoxicated condition; Carteret when Secretary of State, if Horace Walpole may be credited, was never sober; Bolingbroke, who practised every vice, is said to have been a 'four-bottle man;' and Swift found it perilous to dine with Ministers on account of the wine which circulated at their tables. 'Prince Eugene,' he writes, 'dines with the Secretary to-day with about seven or eight general officers or foreign Ministers. They will be all drunk I am sure.' Pope's frail body could not tolerate excess, and he is said to have hastened his end by good living. His friend Fenton 'died of a great chair and two bottles of port a day.' Parnell, who seems to have been in many respects a man of high character, is said to have shortened his life by intemperance; and Gay, who was cossetted like a favourite lapdog by the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, died from indolence and good living.

It may be questioned whether there is a single Wit of the age who did not love port too well, like Addison and Fenton, or suffer from 'carnivoracity' like Arbuthnot. Every section of English society was infected with the 'devil drunkenness,' and the passion for gin created by

the encouragement of home distilleries produced a state of crime, misery, and disease in London and in the country which excited public attention. 'Small as is the place,' writes Mr. Lecky, 'which this fact occupies in English history, it was probably, if we consider all the consequences that have flowed from it, the most momentous in that of the eighteenth century—incomparably more so than any event in the purely political or military annals of the country.'[1]

The cruelty of the age is seen in a contempt for the feelings of others, in the brutal punishments inflicted, in the amusements then popular, and in a general contempt for human suffering. Public executions were so frequent that they were disregarded; and criminals of any note, like Dr. Dodd, were exhibited in their cells for the gaolers' benefit prior to execution; mad people in Bedlam, chained in their cells, also formed one of the sights of London. As late as 1735 men were pressed to death who refused to plead on a capital charge; and women were publicly flogged, and were also burnt at the stake by a law that was not repealed until 1794. Of the heads on Temple Bar, daily exposed to Johnson's eyes in his beloved Fleet Street, we are reminded by an apposite quotation of Goldsmith; and Samuel Rogers, the banker-poet, who died as recently as 1855, remembered having seen one there in his childhood. The public exhibition of offenders in the pillory was not calculated to refine the manners of the people. It afforded a cruel entertainment to the mob, who may be said to have baited these poor victims as they were accustomed to bait bulls and bears. Every kind of offensive missile was thrown at them, and sometimes the strokes proved deadly.

Men who could thus torture a human being were not

[1] Lecky's *England*, vol. i. p. 479.

likely to abstain from cruelty to the lower animals. The poets indeed protested then, as poets had done before, and always have done since, against the unmanly treatment of the dumb fellow-creatures committed to our care, but their voices were little heeded, and even the Prince of Wales visited Hockley-in-the-Hole, in disguise, to witness the torturing of bulls. 'The gladiatorian and other sanguinary sports,' says the author of the *Characteristics*, 'which we allow our people, discover sufficiently our national taste. And the baitings and slaughters of so many sorts of creatures, tame as well as wild, for diversion merely, may witness the extraordinary inclination we have for amphitheatrical spectacles.' [1]

The majesty of the law was maintained by disembowelling traitors, by cutting off the ears, or branding the cheeks of political offenders, and by the penalties inflicted on Roman Catholics, and on Protestant dissenters. Men who deemed themselves honourable gained power through bribery and intrigue. It was through a king's mistress and a heavy bribe that Bolingbroke was enabled to return from exile; Chesterfield intrigued against Newcastle with the Duchess of Yarmouth; and clergymen eager for promotion had no scruple in paying court to women who had lost their virtue.

Never, unless perhaps during the Civil War, was the spirit of party more rampant in the country. Patriotism was a virtue more talked about than felt, and in the cause of faction private characters were assailed and libels circulated through the press. Addison, who did more than any other writer to humanize his age, saw the evil of the time and struck a blow at it with his inimitable humour. The *Spectator* discovers, on his journey to Sir Roger de

[1] Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, vol. i. p. 270.

Coverley's house, that the knight's Toryism grew with the miles that separated him from London:

'In all our journey from London to his house we did not so much as bait at a Whig inn; or if by chance the coachman stopped at a wrong place, one of Sir Roger's servants would ride up to his master full speed, and whisper to him that the master of the house was against such an one in the last election. This often betrayed us into hard beds and bad cheer; for we were not so inquisitive about the inn as the innkeeper; and provided our landlord's principles were sound did not take any notice of the staleness of his provisions. This I found still the more inconvenient, because the better the host was, the worse generally were his accommodations; the fellow knowing very well that those who were his friends would take up with coarse diet and hard lodging. For these reasons, all the while I was upon the road, I dreaded entering into an house of anyone that Sir Roger had applauded for an honest man.'[1]

Against the party zeal of female politicians Addison indulges frequently in humorous sallies. He assures them that it gives an ill-natured cast to the eye, and flushes the cheeks worse than brandy. Party rage, he says, is a male vice, and is altogether repugnant 'to the softness, the modesty, and those other endearing qualities which are natural to the fair sex.'

'When I have seen a pretty mouth uttering calumnies and invectives, what would I not have given to have stopt it? how have I been troubled to see some of the finest features in the world grow pale and tremble with party rage. Camilla is one of the greatest beauties in the British nation, and yet values herself more upon being the virago of one party than upon being the toast of both.

[1] *Spectator*, No. 126.

The dear creature about a week ago encountered the fierce and beautiful Penthesilea across a tea-table; but in the height of her anger, as her hand chanced to shake with the earnestness of the dispute, she scalded her fingers, and spilt a dish of tea upon her petticoat. Had not this accident broke off the debate, nobody knows where it would have ended.'

The coffee-houses in which men aired their wit and discussed the news of the day were wholly dominated by party. 'A Whig,' says De Foe, 'will no more go to the Cocoa Tree or Ozinda's than a Tory will be seen at the coffee-house of St. James's.' Swift declared that the Whig and Tory animosity infected even the dogs and cats. It was inevitable that it should also infect literature. Books were seldom judged on their merits, the praise or blame being generally awarded according to the political principles of their authors. An impartial literary journal did not exist in the days when Addison 'gave his little senate laws' at Button's, and perhaps it does not exist now, but if critical injustice be done in our day it is rarely owing to political causes.

One of the most prominent vices of the time was gambling, which was largely encouraged by the public lotteries, and practised by all classes of the people. This evil was exhibited on a national scale by the establishment of the South Sea Company, which exploded in 1720, after creating a madness for speculation never known before or since. Even men who like Sir Robert Walpole kept their heads, and saw that the bubble would soon burst, invested in stock. Pope had his share in the speculation, and might, had he 'realized' in time, have been the 'lord of thousands;' in the end, however, he was a gainer, though not to a large extent. His friend Gay was less fortunate. He won £20,000, kept the stock too long and was reduced to

beggary. The South Sea Bubble and the Mississippi scheme of Law which burst in the same year and ruined tens of thousands of French families, afford illustrations on a gigantic scale of the prevailing passion for speculation and for gambling.

'The Duke of Devonshire lost an estate at a game of basset. The fine intellect of Chesterfield was thoroughly enslaved by the vice. At Bath, which was then the centre of English fashion, it reigned supreme; and the physicians even recommended it to their patients as a form of distraction. In the green-rooms of the theatres, as Mrs. Bellamy assures us, thousands were often lost and won in a single night. Among fashionable ladies the passion was quite as strong as among men, and the professor of whist and quadrille became a regular attendant at their levees. Miss Pelham, the daughter of the prime minister, was one of the most notorious gamblers of her time, and Lady Cowper speaks in her *Diary* of sittings at Court, of which the lowest stake was 200 guineas. The public lotteries contributed very powerfully to diffuse the taste for gambling among all classes.'[1]

One of the most powerful exponents of the dark side of the century is Hogarth, who makes some of its worst features live before our eyes. So also do the novels of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett. Differing as their works do in character, they have the common merit of presenting in indelible lines a picture of the time in its social aspects. It may have been, as Stuart Mill asserts, an age of strong men, but it was an age of coarse vices, an age wanting in the refinements and graces of life; an age of cruel punishments, cruel sports, and of a political corruption extending through all the departments of the State.

[1] Lecky's *England*, vol. i. p. 522,

But it would be a narrow view of the age to dwell wholly on its gloomier features, which are always the easiest to detect. If the period under consideration had prominent vices, it had also distinguished merits. Under Queen Anne and her immediate successors, home-keeping Englishmen had more space to breathe in than they have now, and trade was not demoralized by excessive competition. No attempt was made to separate class from class, and population was not large enough to make the battle of life almost hopeless in the lowest section of the community. If there was less refinement than among ourselves, there was far less of nervous susceptibility, and the country was free from the half-educated class of men and women who know enough to make them dissatisfied, without attaining to the larger knowledge which yields wisdom and content. To say that the age was better than our own would be to deny a thousand signs of material and intellectual progress, but it had fewer dangers to contend with, and if there was far less of wealth in the country the people were probably more satisfied with their lot.[1]

To glance at the century as a whole does not fall within my province, but I may be permitted to observe that in the course of it science and invention made rapid strides; that under the inspiring sway of Handel the power of music was felt as it was never felt before; that in the latter half of the period the Novel, destined to be one of the noblest fruits of our imaginative literature, attained a robust life in the hands of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett; and that, with Reynolds and Gainsborough, with Romney and Wilson, a glorious school of landscape and portrait painters arose, which is still the pride of England. It will

[1] According to Hallam the thirty years which followed the Treaty of Utrecht 'was the most prosperous season that England had ever experienced.'—*Const. Hist.* ii, 464.

be remembered, too, that many of the great charitable institutions which make our own age illustrious, had their birth in the last. The military genius of England was displayed in Marlborough and in Clive, her mercy in John Howard, her spirit of enterprise in Cook, her self-sacrifice in Wesley and Whitefield, her statesmanship in Walpole, in Chatham, and in William Pitt. In oratory as everyone knows, the eighteenth century was surpassingly great, and never before or since has the country produced a political philosopher of the calibre of Burke. What England reaped in literature during the period of which Pope has been selected as the most striking figure, it will be my endeavour to show in the course of these pages.

PART I.

THE POETS.

CHAPTER I.

ALEXANDER POPE.

It is not unreasonable to call the period we are considering 'the Age of Pope.' He is the representative poet of his century. Its literary merits and defects are alike conspicuous in his verse, and he stands immeasurably above the numerous versifiers who may be said to belong to his school. Savage Landor has observed that there is no such thing as a school of poetry, and this is true in the sense that the essence of this divine art cannot be transmitted, but the form of the art may be, and Pope's style of workmanship made it readily imitable by accomplished craftsmen. Although he affected to call poetry an idle trade he devoted his whole life to its pursuit, and there are few instances in literature in which genius and unwearied labour have been so successfully united. It is to Pope's credit, that, with everything against him in the race of life, he attained the goal for which he started in his youth. The means he employed to reach it were frequently perverse and discreditable, but the courage with which he overcame the obstacles in his path commands our admiration.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744).

Alexander Pope was born in London on May 21st, 1688. He was the only son of his father, a merchant or tradesman, and a Roman Catholic at a time when the members of that church were proscribed by law. The boy was a cripple from his

birth, and suffered from great bodily weakness both in youth and manhood. Looking back upon his life in after years he called it a 'long disease.' The elder Pope seems to have retired from business soon after his son's birth, and at Binfield, nine miles from Windsor, twenty-seven years of the poet's life were spent. As a 'papist' Pope was excluded from the Universities and from every public career, but even under happier circumstances his health would have condemned him to a secluded life. He gained some instruction from the family priest, and also went for a short time to school, but for the most part he was self-educated, and studied so severely that at seventeen his life was probably saved by the sound advice of Dr. Radcliffe to read less and to ride on horseback every day. The rhyming faculty was very early developed, and to use his own phrase he 'lisped in numbers.' As a boy he felt the magic of Spenser, whose enchanting sweetness and boundless wealth of imagination have been now for three hundred years a joy to every lover of poetry. Something, too, he learned from Waller and from Sandys, both of whom, but especially the former, had been of service in giving smoothness to the iambic distich, in which all of Pope's best poems are written. Dryden, however, whom when a little boy he saw at Will's coffee-house — '*Virgilium tantum vidi*' records the memorable day — was the poet whose influence he felt most powerfully. Like Gray several years later, he declared that he learnt versification wholly from his works. From 'knowing Walsh,' the best critic in the nation in Dryden's opinion, the youthful Pope received much friendly counsel; and he had another wise friend in Sir William Trumbull, formerly Secretary of State, who recognized his genius, and gave him as warm a friendship as an old man can offer to a young one. The dissolute Restoration dramatist, Wycherley, was also his temporary companion. The old

man, if Pope's story be true, asked him to correct his poems, which are indeed beyond correction, as the youthful critic appears to have hinted, and the two parted company.

The *Pastorals*, written, according to Pope's assertion, at the age of sixteen, were published in 1709, and won an amount of praise incomprehensible in the present day. Mr. Leslie Stephen has happily appraised their value in calling them 'mere school-boy exercises.' Not thus, however, were they regarded by the poet, or by the critics of his age, yet neither he nor they could have divined the rapid progress of his fame, and that in about six years' time he would be regarded as the greatest of living poets. The *Essay on Criticism*, written, it appears, in 1709, was published two years later, and received the highest honour a poem could then have. It was praised by Addison in the *Spectator* as 'a very fine poem,' and 'a masterpiece in its kind.' The 'kind,' suggested by the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, and the *Art Poétique* of Boileau—translated with Dryden's help by Sir William Soame—suited the current taste for criticism and argument in rhyme, which had led Roscommon to write an *Essay on Translated Verse*, and Sheffield an *Essay on Poetry*. The *Essay on Criticism* is a marvellous production for a young man who had scarcely passed his maturity when it was published. To have written lines and couplets that live still in the language and are on everyone's lips is an achievement of which any poet might be proud, and there are at least twenty such lines or couplets in the poem.

In 1713 *Windsor Forest* appeared. Through the most susceptible years of life the poet had lived in the country, but Nature and Pope were not destined to become friends; he looked at her 'through the spectacles of books' and his description of natural objects is invariably of the conven-

tional type. Although never a resident in London he was unable in the exercise of his art to breathe any atmosphere save that of the town, and might have said, in the words of Lessing to his friend Kleist, 'When you go to the country I go to the coffee-house.'[1]

The use, or as it would be more correct to say the abuse, of classical mythology in the description of rural scenes had the sanction of great names, and Pope was not likely to reject what Spenser and Milton had sanctioned. Gods and goddesses therefore play a conspicuous part in his description of the Forest. The following lines afford a fair illustration of the style throughout, and the sole merit of the poem is the smoothness of versification in which Pope excelled.

> 'Not proud Olympus yields a nobler sight,
> Though gods assembled grace his towering height,
> Than what more humble mountains offer here,
> When in their blessings all those gods appear.
> See Pan with flocks, with fruits Pomona crowned,
> Here blushing Flora paints th' enamelled ground,
> Here Ceres' gifts in waving prospect stand,
> And nodding tempt the joyful reaper's hand;
> Rich Industry sits smiling on the plains,
> And peace and plenty tell a Stuart reigns.'

Pope, who was never known to laugh, was a great wit, but his sense of humour was small, and the descent from these deities to Queen Anne savours not a little of bathos.

In 1712 Pope had published *The Rape of the Lock*, which

[1] Some qualification may be made to these statements. Pope took pleasure in landscape gardening on the English plan, as opposed to the formality of the French and Dutch systems, and the design of the Prince of Wales's garden is said to have been copied from the poet's at Twickenham.

Addison justly praised as 'a delicious little thing.' At the same time he advised the poet not to attempt improving it, which he proposed to do, and Pope most unreasonably attributed this advice to jealousy. In 1714 the delightful poem appeared in its present form with the machinery of sylphs and gnomes adopted from the mysteries of the Rosicrucians. Pope styles it an heroi-comical poem, and judged in the light of a burlesque it is conceived and executed with an art that is beyond praise. Lord Petre, a Roman Catholic peer, had cut off a lock of Miss Arabella Fermor's hair, much to the indignation of her family and possibly of the young lady also. Pope wrote the poem to remove the discord caused by the fatal shears, but its publication, and two or three offensive allusions it contained, only served to add to Miss Fermor's annoyance. 'The celebrated lady herself,' the poet wrote, 'is offended, and which is stranger, not at herself but me. Is not this enough to make a writer never be tender of another's character or fame?' But Pope, whose praise of women is too often a libel upon them, was not as tender as he ought to have been of the lady's reputation.

The offence felt by the heroine of the poem is now unheeded; the dainty art exhibited is a permanent delight, and our language can boast no more perfect specimen of the poetical burlesque than the *Rape of the Lock*. The machinery of the sylphs is managed with perfect skill, and nothing can be more admirable than the charge delivered by Ariel to the sylphs to guard Belinda from an apprehended but unknown danger. The concluding lines shall be quoted:

> 'Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,
> His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,
> Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
> Be stopped in vials, or transfixed with pins;

Or plunged in lakes of bitter washes lie,
Or wedged, whole ages, in a bodkin's eye;
Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain,
While clogged he beats his silken wings in vain;
Or alum styptics, with contracting power,
Shrink his thin essence like a rivelled flower;
Or, as Ixion fixed, the wretch shall feel
The giddy motion of the whirling mill,
In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow,
And tremble at the sea that froths below!'

Another striking portion of the poem is the description of the Spanish game of Ombre, imitated from Vida's *Scacchia Ludus*. 'Vida's poem,' says Mr. Elwin, 'is a triumph of ingenuity, when the intricacy of chess is considered, and the difficulty of expressing the moves in a dead language. Yet the original is eclipsed by Pope's more consummate copy.'[1]

Many famous passages illustrative of Pope's art might be extracted from this poem, but it will suffice to give the portrait of Belinda:

'On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss and infidels adore;
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes and as unfixed as those;
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends,
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
Bright as the sun her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide;
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face and you'll forget them all.'

The *Temple of Fame*, a liberal paraphrase of Chaucer's *House of Fame*, followed in 1715, and despite the praise of Steele, who declared that it had a thousand beauties, and of

[1] Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, vol. ii. p. 160.

Dr. Johnson, who observes that every part is splendid, must be pronounced one of Pope's least attractive pieces. Two poems of the emotional and sentimental class, *Eloisa to Abelard* and the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* (1717), are more worthy of attention. Nowhere, probably, in the language are finer specimens to be met with of rhetorical pathos, but poets like Burns, Cowper, Wordsworth, and Tennyson can touch the heart more deeply by a phrase or couplet than Pope is able to do by his elaborate representations of passion. The reader is not likely to be affected by the following response of Eloisa to an invitation from the spirit world:

> 'I come, I come! prepare your roseate bowers,
> Celestial palms and ever-blooming flowers.
> Thither, where sinners may have rest, I go,
> Where flames refined in breasts seraphic glow;
> Thou, Abelard! the last sad office pay,
> And smooth my passage to the realms of day;
> See my lips tremble and my eye-balls roll,
> Suck my last breath and catch my flying soul!
> Ah no—in sacred vestments may'st thou stand,
> The hallowed taper trembling in thy hand,
> Present the Cross before my lifted eye,
> Teach me at once and learn of me to die.'

The music or the fervour of the poem delighted Porson, famous for his Greek and his potations, and whether drunk or sober he would recite, or rather sing it, from the beginning to the end. The felicity of the versification is incontestable, but at the same time artifice is more visible than nature throughout the Epistle, and this is true also of *The Elegy*, a composition in which Pope's method of treating mournful topics is excellently displayed. The opening lines are suggested by Ben Jonson's *Elegy on the Marchioness of Winchester*, a lady whose death was also lamented by Milton. These we shall not quote, but take in preference a passage

which is perhaps as graceful an expression of poetical rhetoric as can be found in Pope's verse.

> 'By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,
> By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
> By foreign hands thy humble grave adorned,
> By strangers honoured, and by strangers mourned!
> What though no friends in sable weeds appear,
> Grieve for an hour, perhaps, then mourn a year,
> And bear about the mockery of woe,
> To midnight dances and the public show?
> What though no weeping Loves thy ashes grace,
> Nor polished marble emulate thy face?
> What though no sacred earth allow thee room,
> Nor hallowed dirge be muttered o'er thy tomb?
> Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be drest,
> And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast;
> There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
> There the first roses of the year shall blow;
> While angels with their silver wings o'ershade
> The ground, now sacred by thy reliques made.'

For some years Pope had been brooding over and slowly labouring at a task which was destined to add greatly to his fame and also to his fortune.

In 1708 his early friend, Sir William Trumbull, had advised him to translate the *Iliad*, and five years later the poet, following the custom of the age, invited subscriptions to the work, which was to appear in six volumes at the price of six guineas. About this time Swift, who by the aid of his powerful pen was assisting Harley and St. John to rule the country, made Pope's acquaintance, and ultimately became perhaps the most faithful of his friends. Swift, who was able to help everybody but himself, zealously promoted the poet's scheme, and was heard to say at the coffee-houses that 'the best poet in England Mr. Pope a Papist' had begun a translation of Homer which he

should not print till he had a thousand guineas for him.

He was not satisfied with this service, but introduced the poet to St. John, Atterbury, and Harley. The first volume of Pope's *Homer* appeared in 1715, and in the same year Addison's friend Tickell published his version of the first book of the *Iliad*. Pope affected to believe that this was done at Addison's instigation.

Already, as we have said, there had been a misunderstanding between the two famous wits, and Pope, whose irritable temperament led him into many quarrels and created a host of enemies, ceased from this time to regard Addison as a friend. Probably neither of them can be exempted from blame, and we can well believe that Addison, whose supremacy had formerly been uncontested, could not without some jealousy 'bear a brother near the throne,' but the chief interest of the estrangement to the literary student is the famous satire written at a later date, in which Addison appears under the character of Atticus.[1] It is necessary to add here that the whole story of the quarrel comes to us from Pope, who is never to be trusted, either in prose or verse, when he wishes to excuse himself at the expense of a rival.

Pope had no cause for discontent at his position; not even the strife of parties stood in the way of his *Homer*, which was praised alike by Whig and Tory, and brought the translator a fortune. It has been calculated that the entire version of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the payments for which covered eleven years, yielded Pope a clear profit of about £9,000, and it is said to have made at the same time the fortune of his publisher. Pope, I believe, was the first poet who, without the aid of patronage or of the stage, was able to live in comfort from the sale of his works.

[1] See the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.

He knew how to value money, but fame was dearer to him than wealth, and of both he had now enough to satisfy his ambition. Posterity has not endorsed the general verdict of his contemporaries on his famous translation. He had to encounter indeed some severe comments, and Richard Bentley, the greatest classical scholar then living, must have vexed the sensitive poet when he told him that his version was a pretty poem but he must not call it Homer. By this criticism, however, as Matthew Arnold has observed, the work is judged in spite of all its power and attractiveness. Pope wants Homer's simplicity and directness, and his artifices of style are utterly alien to the Homeric spirit. Dr. Johnson quotes the judgment of critics who say that Pope's *Homer* 'exhibits no resemblance of the original and characteristic manner of the Father of Poetry, as it wants his awful simplicity, his artless grandeur, his unaffected majesty,' and observes that this cannot be totally denied. He argues, however, that even in Virgil's time the demand for elegance had been so much increased that mere nature could be endured no longer, that every age improves in elegance, that if some Ovidian graces are, alas! not to be found in the English *Iliad* 'to have added can be no great crime if nothing be taken away.' Johnson was not aware that to add 'poetical elegances' to the words and thoughts of a great poet is to destroy much of the beauty of his verse and many of its most striking characteristics. As well might he say that the beauty of a lovely woman can be enhanced by a profusion of trinkets, or that a Greek statue would be more worthy of admiration if it were elegantly dressed. Dr. Johnson says, with perfect truth, that Pope wrote for his own age, and it may be added that he exhibits extraordinary art in ministering to the taste of the age; yet it is hardly too much to affirm that in the exercise of his craft as a

translator he is continually false to nature and therefore false to Homer.

On the other hand his *Iliad* if read as a story runs so smoothly, that the reader, and especially the young reader, is carried through the narrative without any sense of fatigue. It is not a little praise to say that it is a poem which every school-boy will read with pleasure, and in which every critical reader who is content to surrender his judgment for awhile, will find pleasure also. Mr. Courthope in his elaborate and masterly *Life of Pope*, which gives the coping stone to an exhaustive edition of the poet's works, praises a fine passage from the *Iliad*, which in his judgment attains perhaps the highest level of which the heroic couplet is capable, and 'I do not believe,' he adds, 'that any Englishman of taste and imagination can read the lines without feeling that if Pope had produced nothing but his translation of Homer, he would be entitled to the praise of a great original poet.'

Pope's editor could not perhaps have selected a better illustration of his best manner than this speech of Sarpedon to Glaucus, which is parodied in the *Rape of the Lock*. The concluding lines shall be quoted.

> 'Could all our care elude the gloomy grave,
> Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,
> For lust of fame I should not vainly dare
> In fighting fields, nor urge the soul to war,
> But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
> Disease, and death's inexorable doom;
> The life which others pay let us bestow,
> And give to fame what we to nature owe;
> Brave though we fall, and honoured if we live,
> Or let us glory gain, or glory give.'

We may add that neither its false glitter nor Pope's inability—shared in great measure with every translator—to catch the spirit of the original, can conceal the sustained

power of this brilliant work. Its merit is the more wonderful since the poet's knowledge of Greek was extremely meagre, and he is said to have been constantly indebted to earlier translations. Gibbon said that his *Homer* had every merit except that of faithfulness to the original; and Pope, could he have heard it, might well have been satisfied with the verdict of Gray, a great scholar as well as a great poet, that no other version would ever equal his.

All that has been hitherto said with regard to Pope and Homer relates to his version of the *Iliad*. On that he expended his best powers, and on that it is evident he bestowed infinite pains. The *Odyssey*, one of the most beautiful stories in the world, appears to have been taken up with a weary pen, and in putting it into English he sought the assistance of Broome and Fenton, two minor poets and Cambridge scholars. They translated twelve books out of the twenty-four, and so skilfully did they catch Pope's style that it is almost impossible to discern any difference between his work and theirs. The literary partnership led to one of Pope's discreditable manœuvres, in which, strange to say, he was assisted by Broome, whom he induced to set his name to a falsehood. Pope as we have said, translated twelve books, while eight were allotted to Broome and four to Fenton. Yet he led Broome, unknown to his colleague, to ascribe only three books to himself and two to Fenton, and at the same time the poet, who confessed that he could 'equivocate pretty genteely,' stated the amount he had paid for Broome's eight books as if it had been paid for three. The story is disgraceful both to Pope and Broome, and why the latter should have practised such a deception is unaccountable. He was a beneficed clergyman and a man of wealth, so that he could not have lied for money even if Pope had been willing to bribe him. Fenton was indignant, as he well might be,

but he was too lazy or too good-natured to expose the fraud. Broome had his deserts later on, but Pope, who ridiculed him in the *Dunciad*, and in his *Treatise on the Bathos*, was the last man in the world entitled to render them.

The partnership in poetry which produced the *Odyssey* was not a great literary success, and most readers will prefer the version of Cowper, whose blank verse, though out of harmony with the rapid movement of the *Iliad* is not unfitted for the quieter beauties of the *Odyssey*.

In 1721, prior to the publication of his version, the poet had agreed to edit an edition of Shakespeare, a task as difficult as any which a man of letters can undertake. Pope was not qualified to achieve it. He was comparatively ignorant of Elizabethan literature, the dry labours of an editor were not to his taste, and he lacked true sympathy with the genius of the poet. Failure was therefore inevitable, and Theobald, who has some solid merits as a commentator, found it easy to discern and to expose the errors of Pope. For doing so he was afterwards 'hitched' into the *Dunciad*, and made in the first instance its hero. The "Shakespeare" was published in 1725 in six volumes quarto. 'Its chief claim,' Mr. Courthope writes, 'to interest at the present day, is that it forms the immediate starting-point for the long succession of Pope's satires. . . . The vexation caused to the poet by the undoubted justice of many of Theobald's strictures procured for the latter the unwelcome honour of being recognized as the King of the Dunces, and coupled with Bentley's disparaging mention of the Translation of the *Iliad* provoked the many contemptuous allusions to verbal criticism in Pope's later satires.'[1]

[1] Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, vol. v., p. 195.

A striking peculiarity of Pope's art may be mentioned here. He was able only to play on one instrument, the heroic couplet. When he attempted any other form of verse the result, if not total failure, was mediocrity. It was a daring act of Pope to suggest by his *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, a comparison with the *Alexander's Feast* of Dryden. The performance is perfunctory rather than spontaneous, and the few lyrical efforts he attempted in addition, show no ear for music. The voice of song with which even the minor poets of the Elizabethan age were gifted was silent in England, though not in Scotland, during the first half of the eighteenth century, or if a faint note is occasionally heard, as in the lyrics of Gay, it is without the grace and joyous freedom of the earlier singers. Not that the lyrical form was wanting; many minor versifiers, like Hughes, Sheffield, Granville, and Somerville, wrote what they called songs, but unfortunately without an ear for singing.

In this short summary and criticism of a poet's literary life it would be out of place to insert many biographical details, were it not that, in the case of Pope, the student who knows little or nothing of the man will fail to understand his poetry. A distinguished critic has said that the more we know of Pope's age the better shall we understand Pope. With equal truth it may be said that a familiarity with the poet's personal character is essential to an adequate appreciation of his genius. His friendships, his enmities, his mode of life at Twickenham, the entangled tale of his correspondence, his intrigues in the pursuit of fame, his constitutional infirmities, the personal character of his satires, these are a few of the prominent topics with which a student of the poet must make himself conversant. It may be well, therefore, to give the history in brief outline, and we have now reached the crisis in his fortunes which will conveniently enable us to do so.

In 1716 Pope's family had removed from Binfield to Chiswick. A year later he lost his father, to whose memory he has left a filial tribute, and shortly afterwards he bought the small estate of five acres at Twickenham with which his name is so intimately associated. Before reaching the age of thirty Pope was regarded as the first of living poets. His income more than sufficed for all his wants. At Twickenham the great in intellect, and the great by birth, met around his table; he was welcomed by the highest society in the land, and although proud of his intimacy with the nobility, 'unplaced, unpensioned,' he was 'no man's heir or slave,' and jealously preserved his independence. 'Pope,' says Johnson, 'never set genius to sale, he never flattered those whom he did not love, or praised those whom he did not esteem,' and he was, we may add, in this respect a striking contrast to Dryden, who lavished his flatteries wholesale.

With a mother to whom he was tenderly attached, with troops of friends, with an undisputed supremacy in the world of letters, and with a vocation that was the joy of his heart,—if possessions like these can confer happiness, Pope should have been a happy man.

But his 'crazy carcass,' as the painter Jervas called it, was united to the most suspicious and irritable of temperaments, and the fine wine of his poetry was rarely free from bitterness in the cup. Pope could be a warm friend, but was not always a faithful one, and even women whose friendship he had enjoyed suffered from the venom of his satire. He was not a man to rise above his age, and it would be charitable to ascribe a portion of his grossness to it. Voltaire is said by his loose talk to have driven Pope's good old mother from the table at Twickenham; Walpole's language not only in his home at Houghton, but at Court, was insufferably coarse; and Pope

wrote to ladies in language that must have disgusted modest women even in his free-speaking day. His foul lines on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, to whom he had formerly written in a most ridiculous strain of gallantry, and to whom he is said to have made love,[1] cannot easily be characterized in moderate language. Lady Mary had little delicacy herself, but the poet, who thought himself a gentleman, had no excuse for abusing her. Excuses indeed are not easily to be offered for Pope's moral defalcations. His life was a series of petty intrigues, trickeries, and deceptions. He could not, it has been said,—the conceit is borrowed from Young's *Satires*—'take his tea without a stratagem,' and knew how to utter the loftiest sentiments while acting the most contemptible of parts.

The long and intricate deceptions which he practised to secure the publication of his letters, while so manipulating them as to enhance his credit, were suspected to some extent in his own age, and have been painfully laid bare in ours. It is an amazing story, which may be read at large in Mr. Dilke's *Papers of a Critic*, or in the elaborate narrative of Mr. Elwin in the first volume of his edition of *Pope*. It will be there seen how the poet compiled fictitious letters, suppressed passages, altered dates, manufactured letters out of other letters, and secretly enabled the infamous bookseller Curll to publish his correspondence surreptitiously in order that he might have the excuse for printing it himself in a more carefully prepared form. The worst feature of the miserable story is the poet's conduct with regard to Swift, his oldest and most faithful friend. On

[1] 'Lady Mary,' says Byron, 'was greatly to blame in that quarrel for having encouraged Pope. . . . She should have remembered her own line,

'"He comes too near who comes to be denied."'

this subject the writer may be allowed to quote what he has said elsewhere.

'Years before, Swift, who cared little for literary reputation, and never resorted to any artifice to promote it, had suspected Pope of a desire to make literary capital out of their correspondence, and the poet had excused himself according to his wonted fashion. After the publication by Curll, he begged Swift to return him his letters lest they should fall into the bookseller's hands. The Dean replied, no doubt to Pope's infinite chagrin, that they were safe in his keeping, as he had given strict orders in his will that his executors should burn every letter he might leave behind him. Afterwards he promised that Pope should eventually have them but declined giving them up during his lifetime. Hereupon Pope changed his tactics and begged that he might have the letters to print. The publication by Curll of two letters (probably another *ruse* of Pope's) formed an additional ground for urging his request. All his efforts were unavailing until he obtained the assistance of Lord Orrery, to whom Swift was at length induced to deliver up the letters. There was a hiatus in the correspondence and Pope took advantage of this and of a blunder made by Swift, whose memory at the time was not to be trusted, to hint, what he dared not directly assert, that the bulk of the collection remained with the Dean, and that Swift's own letters had been returned to him. We have now irresistible proof that the Dublin edition of the letters was taken from an impression sent from England and sent by Pope. Nor was this all. The poet acted with still greater meanness, for he had the audacity to deplore the sad vanity of Swift in permitting the publication of his correspondence, and to declare that "no decay of body is half so miserable."'[1]

[1] *Studies in English Literature*, p. 47.—*Stanford.*

That he had many fine qualities in spite of the littlenesses which mar his character one would be loath to doubt. Among his nobler traits was an ardent passion for literature, a courage which enabled him to face innumerable obstacles —'Pope,' says Mr. Swinburne, 'was as bold as a lion'— and a constant devotion to his parents, especially to his mother, who lived to a great age. There are no sincerer words in his letters than those which relate to Mrs. Pope. 'It is my mother only,' he once wrote, regretting his inability to leave home, 'that robs me of half the pleasure of my life, and that gives me the greatest at the same time,' and the lines expressing his affection for her are familiar to most readers. Truly does Johnson say that 'life has among its soothing and quiet comforts few things better to give than such a son.'

Among his lady friends the dearest was Martha Blount, the younger of two beautiful sisters, of whom Gay sang as 'the fair-haired Martha and Teresa brown.' They came of an old Roman Catholic family residing at Mapledurham, and were little more than girls when Pope first knew them. With the elder sister he quarrelled, but Martha was faithful to him for life, and when he was dying it is said that her coming in 'gave a new turn of spirits or a temporary strength to him.' Swift, as we have said, was one of the warmest of Pope's friends, and his letters to the poet are by far the most attractive portion of the published correspondence. He visited him at Twickenham more than once, and on one occasion spent some months under his roof. Bolingbroke, his 'guide, philosopher, and friend,' who for a time lived near to him at Dawley, was a frequent guest, so also, in the days of their intimacy, was Lady Mary, who had a house at Twickenham. Thomson the poet, too, lived not far off, and was visited by his brother bard, whom Thomson's barber describes as 'a strange, ill-formed, little figure

of a man,' but he adds, 'I have heard him and Quin and Patterson[1] talk so together that I could have listened to them for ever.' Arbuthnot, one of the finest wits and best men of his time, who, as Swift said, could do everything but walk, was also a faithful friend of Pope; so was Gay, and so was Bishop Atterbury, who, as the poet said, first taught him to think "as becomes a reasonable creature."

James Craggs, who had been formerly Secretary of State, and was on the warmest terms of intimacy with the poet, resided for some time near his friend in order to enjoy the pleasure of his society. When in office he proposed to pay him a pension of £300 a year out of the secret service money, but Pope declined the offer. Statesmen and men of active pursuits cultivated the society of the poetical recluse, and Pope, whose compliments are monuments more enduring than marble, has recorded their visits to Twickenham:

> 'There, my retreat the best companions grace,
> Chiefs out of war, and statesmen out of place,
> There St. John mingles with my friendly bowl,
> The feast of reason and the flow of soul,
> And he whose lightning pierced the Iberian lines[2]
> Now forms my quincunx and now ranks my vines.'

Among Pope's associates was the 'blameless Bethel,'

> '—— who always speaks his thought,
> And always thinks the very thing he ought,'

[1] Quin (1693-1766) was the famous actor, and Patterson was Thomson's deputy in the surveyor-generalship of the Leeward Isles, and ultimately his successor.

[2] The Earl of Peterborough, the meteor-like brilliancy of whose actions forms one of the most striking chapters in the history of his time.

and Berkeley who had 'every virtue under heaven,' and Lord Bathurst who was unspoiled by wealth and joined

'With splendour, charity; with plenty, health;'

and 'humble Allen' who

'Did good by stealth and blushed to find it fame;'

and many another friend who lives in his verse and is secure of the immortality a poet can confer.

The five volumes which contain the letters between Pope and his friends exhibit an interesting picture of the times and of the writers. The poet's own letters, as may be supposed from the thought he bestowed on them, are full of artifice, and composed with the most elaborate care. Every sentence is elaborately turned, and the ease and naturalness which give a charm to the letters of Cowper and of Southey are not to be found in Pope. His epistles are weighted with compliments and with professions of the most exalted morality. 'He laboured them,' says Horace Walpole, 'as much as the *Essay on Man*, and as they were written to everybody they do not look as if they had been written to anybody.' Pope said once, what he did not mean, that he could not write agreeable letters. This was true; his letters are, as Charles Fox said, 'very bad,' but some of Pope's friends write admirably, and if there is much that can be skipped without loss in the correspondence, there is much which no student of the period can afford to neglect. 'There has accumulated,' says Mark Pattison, 'round Pope's poems a mass of biographical anecdote such as surrounds the writings of no other English author,' and not a little knowlege of this kind is to be gleaned from his correspondence.

In the years spent at Twickenham Pope produced his most characteristic work. It is as a satirist that he,

with one exception, excels all English poets, and Pope's careful workmanship often makes his satirical touches more attractive than Dryden's.

'To attack vices in the abstract,' he said to Arbuthnot, 'without touching persons, may be safe fighting indeed, but it is fighting with shadows;' and Pope, under the plea of a detestation of vice, generally betrayed his contempt or hatred of the men whom he assailed. No doubt the critics and Grub Street hacks of the day gave him provocation. Pope, however, was frequently the first to take the field, and so eager was he to meet his foes that it would seem as if he enjoyed the conflict. Yet there were times when he felt acutely the assaults made upon him. 'These things are my diversion,' he once said, with a ghastly smile, and it was observed that he writhed in agony like a man undergoing an operation. The attacks made with these paper bullets, not only on the side of Grub Street but on his own, show very vividly the coarseness of London society. Courtesy was disregarded by men who claimed to be wits and scholars. Pope held, perhaps, a higher place in literature in his own day than Lord Tennyson has held in ours, for the best beloved of Laureates had noble rivals and friends who came near to him in fame, while Pope, until the publication of Thomson's *Seasons*, in 1730, stood alone in poetical reputation. Yet he was reviled in the language of Billingsgate, and had no scruple in using that language himself. Late in life Pope collected the libels made upon him and bound them in four volumes, but he omitted to mention the provocation which gave rise to many of them. Eusden, Colley Cibber, Dennis, Theobald, Blackmore, Smyth, and Lord Hervey are among the prominent criminals placed in Pope's pillory, and the student of the age may find an idle entertainment in tracking the poet's thorny course, while

he gives an unenviable notoriety to names of which the larger number were 'born to be forgot.'

In 1725 Swift had written to Pope advising him not to immortalize the names of bad poets by putting them in his verse, and Pope replied to this advice by saying, 'I am much the happier for finding (a better thing than our wits) our judgments jump in the notion that all scribblers should be passed by in silence.' How entirely his inclination got the better of his judgment was seen three years later in the *Dunciad*. The first three books of this famous satire were published in 1728. It is generally regarded as Pope's masterpiece, but the accuracy of such an estimate is doubtful. So heavily weighted is the poem with notes, prefaces, and introductions that the text appears to be smothered by them. It was Pope's aim to mystify his readers, and in this he has succeeded, for the mystifications of the poem even confound the commentators. The personalities of the satire excited a keen interest, and much amusement to readers who were not included in Pope's black list of dunces. At the same time it roused a number of authors to fury, as it well might. His satire is often unjust, and he includes among the dunces men wholly undeserving of the name, who had had the misfortune to offend him. To place a great scholar like Bentley, an eloquent and earnest preacher like Whitefield, and a man of genius like Defoe among the dunces was to stultify himself, and if Pope in his spite against Theobald found some justification for giving the commentator pre-eminence for dulness in three books of the *Dunciad*, his anger got the better of his wit when in Book IV. he dethroned Theobald to exalt Colley Cibber. For Cibber, with a thousand faults, so far from being dull had a buoyancy of heart and a sprightliness of intellect wholly out of harmony with the character he is made to assume.

That he might have some excuse for his dashing assaults in the *Dunciad*, Pope had published in the third volume of the *Miscellanies*, of which he and Swift, Arbuthnot and Gay were the joint authors, an *Essay on Bathos* in which several writers of the day were sneered at. The assault provoked the counter-attack for which Pope was looking, and he then produced the satire which was already prepared for the press. In its publication the poet, as usual, made use of trickery and deception. At first he issued an imperfect edition with initial letters instead of names, but on seeing his way to act more openly, the poem appeared in a large edition with names and notes.

'In order to lessen the danger of prosecution for libel,' Mr. Courthope writes, 'he prevailed on three peers, with whom he was on the most intimate terms, the good-natured Lord Bathurst, the easy-going Earl of Oxford, and the magnificent Earl of Burlington, to act as his nominal publishers; and it was through them that copies of the enlarged edition were at first distributed, the booksellers not being allowed to sell any in their shops. The King and Queen were each presented with a copy by the hands of Sir R. Walpole. In this manner, as the report quickly spread that the poem was the property of rich and powerful noblemen, there was a natural disinclination on the part of the dunces to take legal proceedings, and the prestige of the *Dunciad* being thus fairly established, the booksellers were allowed to proceed with the sale in regular course.'[1]

The *Dunciad* owes its merit to the literary felicities with which its pages abound. The theme is a mean one. Pope, from his social eminence at Twickenham, looks with scorn on the authors who write for bread, and with malig-

[1] *Life of Pope*, p. 216.

nity on the authors whom he regarded as his enemies. There is, for the most part, little elevation in his method of treatment, and we can almost fancy that we see a cruel joy in the poet's face as he impales the victims of his wrath. Some portions of the *Dunciad* are tainted with the imagery which, to quote the strong phrase of Mr. Churton Collins, often makes Swift as offensive as a polecat,[1] and there is no part of it which can be read with unmixed pleasure, if we except the noble lines which conclude the satire. Those lines may be almost said to redeem the faults of the poem, and they prove incontestably, if such proof be needed, Pope's claim to a place among the poets.

'In vain, in vain,—the all-composing Hour
Resistless falls; the Muse obeys the Power.
She comes! she comes! the sable Throne behold,
Of Night primæval and of Chaos old!
Before her Fancy's gilded clouds decay,
And all its varying rainbows die away.
Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
The meteor drops, and in a flash expires,
As one by one at dread Medea's strain,
The sickening stars fade off the etherial plain;
As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand oppress,
Closed one by one to everlasting rest;
Thus at her felt approach and secret might,
Art after Art goes out, and all is Night.
See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
Mountains of Casuistry heaped o'er her head!
Philosophy that leaned on Heaven before,
Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more;
Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
And Metaphysic calls for aid on Sense!
See Mystery to Mathematics fly!

[1] 'Pope and Swift,' says Dr. Johnson, 'had an unnatural delight in ideas physically impure, such as every other tongue utters with unwillingness, and of which every ear shrinks from the mention.'

In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
And unawares Morality expires.
Nor public Flame, nor private, dares to shine;
Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!
Lo! thy dread Empire, Chaos! is restored;
Light dies before thy uncreating word;
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And universal Darkness buries All.'

The publication of the *Dunciad* showed Pope where his main strength as a poet lay. That the writers he had attacked, in many instances without provocation, should resent the ungrateful notoriety conferred upon them was inevitable. In self-defence, and to add to the provocation already given, he started a paper called the *Grub Street Journal*, which existed for eight years. Pope, who had no scruple in 'hazarding a lie,' denying all the time that he had any connection with it.

His next work of significance, *The Essay on Man*, a professedly philosophical poem by an author who knew little of philosophy, was published in four epistles, in 1733-4. Bolingbroke's brilliant, versatile, and shallow intellect had strongly impressed Swift, and had also fascinated Pope. It has been commonly supposed that the *Essay* owes its existence to his suggestion and guidance. The poet believed in his philosophy, and had the loftiest estimate of his genius. In the last and perhaps finest passage of the poem he calls Bolingbroke the 'master of the poet and the song,' and draws a picture of the ambitious statesman as beautiful as it is false. In Mark Pattison's Introduction to *The Essay on Man*,[1] which every student of Pope will read, he objects to the notion that the poet took the scheme of his work from Bolingbroke, observing that both derived their views from a common source.

[1] Clarendon Press, Oxford.

'Everywhere, in the pulpit, in the coffee-houses, in every pamphlet, argument on the origin of evil, on the goodness of God, and the constitution of the world was rife. Into the prevailing topic of polite conversation Bolingbroke, who returned from exile in 1723, was drawn by the bent of his native genius. Pope followed the example and impulse of his friend's more powerful mind. Thus much there was of special suggestion. But the arguments or topics of the poem are to be traced to books in much vogue at the time; to Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* 1711), King on the *Origin of Evil* (1702), and particularly to Leibnitz, *Essais de Théodicée* (1710).'

In admitting that Pope followed the impulse of a more powerful mind, Mr. Pattison asserts as much perhaps as can be known with certainty as to Bolingbroke's influence, but it is reasonable to believe that the close intercourse of the two men did immensely sway the more impressionable, and, so far as philosophy is concerned, the more ignorant of the two. Mr. Pattison also overlooks the fact that Pope confessed to Warburton that he had never read a line of Leibnitz in his life. That the poet acknowledges his large debt to Bolingbroke, and that Bolingbroke confesses it was due, is all that can be declared with certainty. That which makes the *Essay* worthy the reading is the fruit, not of the argument but of the poetry, and for that Pope trusted to his own genius.

His attempt to 'vindicate the ways of God to man' is confused and contradictory, and no modern reader, perplexed with the mystery of existence, is likely to gain aid from Pope. Nominally a Roman Catholic, and in reality a deist, apart from poetry he does not seem to have had strong convictions on any subject, and was content to be swayed by the opinions current in society. In undertaking to write an ethical work like the *Essay* his ambition

was greater than his strength, yet if Pope's philosophy does not 'find' us, to use Coleridge's phrase, it did appeal to a large number of minds in his own day, and had not lost its popularity at a later period. The poem has been frequently translated into French, into Italian, and into German; it was pronounced by Voltaire to be the most useful and sublime didactic poem ever written in any language; it was admired by Kant and quoted in his lectures; and it received high praise from the Scotch philosopher, Dugald Stewart. The charm of poetical expression is lost or nearly lost in translations, and while the sense may be retained the aroma of the verse is gone. The popularity of the *Essay* abroad is therefore not easily to be accounted for, unless we accept the theory that the shallow creed on which it is based suited an age less earnest than our own.[1]

Pope has no strong convictions in this poem, but he has many moods. On one page he is a pantheist, on another he says what he probably did not mean, that God inspires men to do evil, and on a third that 'all our knowledge is ourselves to know.' Nowhere in the argument does Pope seem to have a firm standing, and De Quincey is not far wrong in saying that it is 'the realization of anarchy.'

Read the poem for its poetical merits and you will forget its defects. Pope was a superficial teacher, but direct teaching is not the end of poetry. *The Essay on Man* is not a poem which can be read and re-read with ever-growing delight, but there are passages in it of as fine an order as any that he has composed on more familiar subjects. Pope was, as Sir William Hamilton said, a curious reader, and the ideas versified in the poem may be traced to a variety of sources.

[1] No doubt many distinguished foreigners who appreciated the beauty of the poem had read it in the original.

Students who wish to follow this track will find all the help they need in Mr. Pattison's instructive notes, and in the comments attached to the poem in Elwin and Courthope's edition. In his Introduction Mr. Pattison observes that 'the subject of the *Essay on Man* is not, considered in itself, one unfit for poetry. Had Pope had a genius for philosophy there was no reason why he should not have selected a philosophical subject. Didactic poetry is a mistake if not a contradiction in terms. But poetry is not necessarily didactic because its subject is philosophical.'

It is always difficult to define the themes suitable for poetry. Many theories have been formed as to the scope of the art, and poets have been amply instructed by critics as to what they ought to do, and what they should avoid doing. The theories may appear sound, the arguments convincing, until a great poet arises and knocks them on the head. In a sense every poet of the highest order is also a philosopher and a prophet who sees into 'the life of things.' Whether a philosophical subject can be fitly represented in the imaginative light of poetry is a matter for discussion rather than for decision. In the case of Pope, however, it will be evident to all studious readers that he was incapable of the continuous thought needed for the argument of the *Essay*.

'Anything like sustained reasoning,' says Mr. Leslie Stephen, 'was beyond his reach. Pope felt and thought by shocks and electric flashes. . . . The defect was aggravated or caused by the physical infirmities which put sustained intellectual labour out of the question.' [1]

Crousaz, a Swiss pastor and professor, who appears to have competed with Berkeley for a prize and won it, attacked Pope's *Essay* for its want of orthodoxy, and his work was translated into English. The poet became

[1] Stephen's *Pope*, p. 163.

alarmed, but had the good fortune to find a champion in Warburton, who for the rest of his life did Pope much service, not always of a reputable kind. We shall have more to say of him later on, and it will suffice to observe here that Warburton, who through Pope's friendship obtained a good wife, a fortune, and a bishopric, was not a man of high character. His sole object was to advance in life, and he succeeded.

The *Moral Essays* as they are called, and the *Imitations from Horace* are the final and crowning efforts of the poet's genius. They contain his finest workmanship as a satirist, and will be read, I think, with more pleasure than the *Dunciad*, despite Mr. Ruskin's judgment of that poem as 'the most absolutely chiselled and monumental work "exacted" in our country.'[1] It is impossible to concur in this estimate. The imagery of the poem serves only to disgust, and the spiteful attacks made in it on forgotten men want the largeness of purpose that lifts satire above what is of temporary interest, making it a lesson for all time.

Pope's venom, and the personal animosities which give the sharpest sting, and in some instances a zest, to his verse, are also amply displayed in the *Moral Essays* and in the *Imitations*, but the scope is wider in these poems, and the subjects allow of more versatile treatment. They should be read with the help of notes, a help generally needed for satirical poetry, but it should be remembered always that editorial judgments are to be received with discretion and not servilely followed. There is perhaps no danger more carefully to be shunned by the student of literature than the habit of resting satisfied with opinions at second-hand. Better a wrong estimate formed after due reading and

[1] *Lectures on Art*, p. 70, Oxford.

thought, than a right estimate gleaned from critics, without any thought at all.

According to Warburton, who is as tricky as Pope himself when it suits his purpose to be so, the *Essay on Man* was intended to form four books, in which, as part of the general design, the *Moral Essays* would have been included, as well as Book IV. of the *Dunciad*, but to have welded these *Essays*, which were published separately, into one continuous poem would neither have suited Pope's genius nor the character of the poems; and how the last book of the *Dunciad* could have been included in such an *olla podrida* it is difficult to conceive. The poet was fond of projects, and this, happily for his readers, remained one. The dates of the four *Essays*, which are really Epistles, and appeared in folio pamphlets, run over several years, but were afterwards re-arranged by Pope. That to Lord Burlington, *Of the Use of Riches* (Epistle IV.), was published in 1731, under the title, *Of False Taste*; that to Lord Bathurst, *Of the Use of Riches* (Epistle III.), in 1732; the epistle to Lord Cobham (Epistle I.), *Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men*, bears the date of 1733; and that To a Lady (Epistle II.), *Of the Characters of Women*, in 1735. Pope wrote other Epistles, some at a much earlier period of his career, which follow the *Moral Essays* but are not connected with them. Of these one is addressed to Addison, two are to Martha Blount, for whom the second of the *Moral Essays* was written; one to the painter Jervas, originally printed in 1717; while another, a few lines only in length, was addressed to Craggs when Secretary of State. Space will not allow of examining each of the *Essays* minutely, but there are portions of them which call for comment.

The first *Moral Essay*, *Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men*, in which Pope enlarges on his theory of a ruling

passion, affords a significant example of his incapacity for sustaining an argument, since Warburton, to use his own words, entirely changed and reversed the order and disposition of the several parts to make the composition more coherent. That he has succeeded is doubtful, that he should have ventured upon such a task shows where Pope's weakness lay as a philosophical poet. It is the least interesting of the *Essays*, but is not without lines that none but Pope could have written. *The Characters of Women*, the subject of the second *Essay*, was not one which the satirist could treat with justice. He saw little in the sex save their foibles, and the lines with which it opens show the spirit that animates the poem:

> 'Nothing so true as what you once let fall;
> "Most women have no character at all,"
> Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
> And best distinguished by black, brown, or fair.'

The satire contains one of Pope's offensive allusions to Lady Mary, and the celebrated portrait drawn from two notable women, the Duchess of Buckingham and Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, from the latter of whom the poet, at one time, despite his unquestionable love of independence, received £1,000. The story, like many another in the career of Pope, is wrapt in mystery.

Pope took great pains with the Epistle *Of the Use of Riches*. It was altered from the original conception by the advice of Warburton, who cared more for the argument of a poem than for its poetry. The thought and purpose of the *Essay* are defective, notwithstanding Warburton's effort to clear them, but these defects are of slight moment when compared with the brilliant passages with which the poem is studded. Among them is the famous description of the Duke of Buckingham's death-bed which should be com-

pared with Dryden's equally famous lines on the same nobleman's character.

> 'In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half-hung,
> The floors of plaster, and the walls of dung,
> On once a flock-bed, but repaired with straw,
> With tape-tied curtains never meant to draw,
> The George and Garter dangling from that bed
> Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
> Great Villiers lies—alas! how changed from him,
> That life of pleasure, and that soul of whim!
> Gallant and gay, in Cliveden's proud alcove,
> The bower of wanton Shrewsbury and love;
> Or just as gay at council, in a ring
> Of mimic statesmen and their merry King.
> No wit to flatter left of all his store!
> No fool to laugh at, which he valued more.
> There, victor of his health, of fortune, friends,
> And fame, this lord of useless thousands ends.'

There is also a covert attack in this Epistle upon the moneyed interest represented by Walpole, and on the political corruption which he sanctioned and promoted. Yet Pope knew how to praise the great Whig statesman for his social qualities:

> 'Seen him I have, but in his happier hour
> Of social pleasure, ill exchanged for power;
> Seen him uncumbered with the venal tribe,
> Smile without art and win without a bribe.'

Epistle IV. pursues the same subject as the third, and deals mainly with false taste in the expenditure of wealth, and with the necessity of following 'sense, of every art the soul.' In this poem there is the far-famed description of Timon's Villa, and by Timon Pope was accused of representing the Duke of Chandos, whose estate at Canons he is supposed to have held in scorn after having been, as he acknowledges, 'distinguished' by its master. That would not have deterred Pope from producing a brilliant picture,

and his equivocations did but serve to increase suspicion. Probably he found it convenient to use some features of what he may have seen at Canons while composing a general sketch with no special application. The *Moral Essays*, it may be added, are not especially moral, but they are full of fine things, and form a portion of Pope's verse second only to the *Imitations from Horace*.

These *Imitations* are introduced by the Prologue addressed to Dr. Arbuthnot, a poem of more than common brilliancy, and also more than commonly venomous. Nowhere, perhaps, is there in Pope's works so powerful and bitter an attack as the twenty-five lines in the Prologue devoted to the vivisection of Lord Hervey, which we are forced to admire while feeling their malevolence; nowhere is there a more consummate piece of satire than the twenty-two lines that contain the poet's masterpiece, the character of Atticus; and nowhere, I may add, are there lines more personally interesting. Portions of the poem were written long before the date of publication, and this is Pope's excuse, a rather lame one perhaps, for printing the character of Atticus and the lines on his mother after the death of Addison and of Mrs. Pope.

'When I had a fever one winter in town,' Pope said to his friend Spence, 'that confined me to my room for some days, Lord Bolingbroke came to see me, happened to take up a Horace that lay on the table, and in turning it over dipt on the first satire of the second book. He observed how well that would hit my case if I were to imitate it in English. After he was gone I read it over, translated it in a morning or two, and sent it to press in a week or fortnight after. And this was the occasion of my imitating some other of the satires and epistles afterwards.'

Bolingbroke did his friend a better service in giving

this advice than he had done with regard to the *Essay on Man*; and the six *Imitations*, with the Prologue and Epilogue, which are among the latest fruits of Pope's genius as a satirist, are also the ripest.

Warburton, writing of the *Imitations of Horace*, says: 'Whoever expects a paraphrase of Horace or a faithful copy of his genius or his manner of writing in these *Imitations* will be much disappointed. Our author uses the Roman poet for little more than his canvas; and if the old design or colouring chance to suit his purpose, it is well: if not, he employs his own without scruple or ceremony.'

This is true. Pope makes use of Horace when it suits his convenience, but never follows him servilely, and quits him altogether when his design carries him another way.

It was inevitable that he should exercise this freedom, since, as Johnson has pointed out, there will always be an irreconcilable dissimilitude between Roman images and English manners. Moreover, the aim of the two poets was different, Pope's main object being to express personal enmities and to give an exalted notion of his own virtue.

In the opening lines of his First Satire Pope follows Horace pretty closely. Both poets complain that some persons think them too severe, and others too complaisant; both take the advice of a lawyer, Horace of C. Trebatius Testa, who gives him the pithiest replies; and Pope of Fortescue. Both complain that they cannot sleep, the prescription of a wife and cowslip wine being given by the English adviser, while Testa advises Horace to swim thrice across the Tiber and moisten his lips with wine. Throughout the rest of the satire Pope takes only casual glances at the Roman original, and if in the Second Satire the English poet follows Horace in the first few verses in recommending frugality, and in the advice to keep the middle state, and neither to lean on this side or on that, the resemblance

between the poets is seldom striking, and the spirit which animates them is different, Horace being classical, and therefore open to the apprehension of all educated readers, while Pope is in a sense provincial, and, as I have already said with reference to the *Dunciad*, cannot be fully enjoyed or even understood without some knowledge of the time and of the men whom he lashes in his satire. The Sixth Epistle of the First Book of Horace, which Pope attempts to imitate, is, as Mr. Courthope observes, 'incapable of imitation. Its humour, no less than its philosophy, belongs entirely to the Pagan World.' In a general sense it is also true that Horace's style, whether of language or of thought, will not bear transplanting. Indeed, whatever is most characteristic and most exquisite in a poet's work is precisely the portion which cannot be clothed in a foreign dress.

'Life,' said Pope, 'when the first heats are over is all down hill,' and with him the downward progress began at a time when most men are still standing on the summit. Never was there a more fiery spirit in so weak a body. He suffered frequently from headaches, which he relieved by inhaling the steam of coffee. Unfortunately he pampered his appetite and paid a heavy penalty for doing so. Every change of weather affected him; and at the time when most people indulge in company, he tells Swift that he hid himself in bed. Although he sneers at Lord Hervey for taking asses' milk he tried that remedy himself, and he frequently needed medical aid. In his early days he was strong enough to ride on horseback, but in later life his weakness was so great that he was in constant need of help. M. Taine, whose criticism of Pope needs to be read with caution, indulges in an exaggerated description of his bodily condition, observing that when arrived at maturity he appeared no longer capable of existing, and styling him

'a nervous abortion.' The poet's condition was sad enough as told by Dr. Johnson, without amplifying it as M. Taine has done. 'One side was contracted. His legs were so slender that he enlarged their bulk with three pairs of stockings, which were drawn on and off by the maid; for he was not able to dress or undress himself, and neither went to bed nor rose without help. His weakness made it very difficult for him to be clean.' After this forlorn description of the poet's state it is a little grotesque to read that his dress of ceremony was black, with a tie-wig and a little sword. A distorted body often holds a generous and untainted soul. This was not the case with Pope, and the sympathy he stood in so large a need of himself, was seldom given to others.

In the spring of 1744 it became evident that the end was approaching. Three weeks before his death he distributed the *Moral Epistles* among his friends, saying: 'Here I am, like Socrates, dispensing my morality amongst my friends just as I am dying.' He died peacefully on May 30th, 1744, and was buried in Twickenham Church near the monument erected to his parents.

Pope's standing among his country's poets has been the source of much controversy. There have been critics who deny to him the name of a poet, while others place him in the first rank. In his own century there was comparatively little difference of opinion with regard to his merits. Chesterfield gave him the warmest praise; Swift, Addison, and Warburton ranked him with the peers of song; Johnson, whose discriminative criticism reaches perhaps its highest level in his *Life of Pope*, in reply to the question which had been asked, even in his day, whether Pope was a poet? asks in return, 'If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?' and adds that 'to circumscribe poetry by a definition will only show the narrowness of the definer, though a definition which shall exclude Pope will not readily be

made.' Joseph Warton, too, Johnson's contemporary and friend, while preferring the Romantic School to the Classical, allows that in that species of poetry wherein Pope excelled he is superior to all mankind.

In our century Bowles, whose edition of his works provoked prolonged discussion, in which Campbell, Byron, and the *Quarterly Review* took part, places Pope above Dryden. Byron, with more enthusiasm than judgment, regarded him as the greatest name in our poetry; Scott, with generous appreciation of a genius so alien to his own, called him a 'true Deacon of the craft,' and at one time proposed editing his works, a task projected also by Mr. Ruskin, who, putting Shakespeare aside as rather the world's than ours, holds Pope 'to be the most perfect representative we have since Chaucer of the true English mind.' 'Matched on his own ground,' says Mr. Swinburne, 'he never has been nor can be.' And Mr. Lowell in the same strain observes that 'in his own province he still stands unapproachably alone.'

What then is Pope's ground? What is this province of which he is the sole ruler? To a considerable extent the question has been answered in these pages, but it may be well to sum up with more definiteness what has been already stated.

In poetry Pope takes a first place in the second order of poets. The deficiencies which forbid his entrance into the first rank are obvious. He cannot sing, he has no ear for the subtlest melodies of verse, he is not a creative poet, and has few of the spirit-stirring thoughts which the noblest poets scatter through their pages with apparent unconsciousness. There are no depths in Pope and there are no heights; he has neither eye for the beauties of Nature, nor ear for her harmonies, and a primrose was no more to him than it was to Peter Bell.

These are defects indeed, but nothing is more unfair says a great French critic than to judge notable minds solely by their defects, and in spite of them Pope's position is so unassailable that the critic must take a contracted view of the poet's art who questions his right to the title.

His merits are of a kind not likely to be affected by time; a lively fancy, a power of satire almost unrivalled, and a skill in using words so consummate that there is no poet, excepting Shakespeare, who has left his mark upon the language so strongly. The loss to us if Pope's verse were to become extinct cannot readily be measured. He has said in the best words what we all know and feel, but cannot express, and has made that classical which in weaker hands would be commonplace. His sensibility to the claims of his art is exquisite, the adaptation of his style to his subject shows the hand of a master, and if these are not the highest gifts of a poet, they are gifts to which none but a poet can lay claim.

CHAPTER II.

PRIOR, GAY, YOUNG, BLAIR, THOMSON.

Matthew Prior (1664-1721).

THE ease with which the Queen Anne wits obtained office and rose to posts of high trust through the pleasant art of verse-making, is conspicuous in the career of Prior. His parents are unknown, the place of his birth is somewhat doubtful, although he is claimed by Wimborne-Minster, in Dorsetshire, and the first trustworthy facts recorded of his early career are that he was a Westminster scholar when the famous Dr. Busby, whose discipline was physical as well as mental, presided over the school. His father died, and his mother being no longer able to pay the school fees, Prior was placed with an uncle who kept the Rhenish Wine Tavern in Westminster. His seat was in the bar, and there the Earl of Dorset (1637-1705-6), a small poet, but a generous patron of poets, found the youth reading Horace, and, pleased with his 'parts,' sent him back to Westminster, whence he went up to Cambridge as a scholar at St. John's, the college destined a century later to receive one of the greatest of English poets.

Charles Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax (1661-1715), the son of a younger son of a nobleman, was also a Westminster scholar. He entered Trinity College in 1679, and like Prior appears to have owed his good fortune to the rhymer's craft. 'At thirty,' writes Lord

Macaulay, 'he would gladly have given all his chances in life for a comfortable vicarage and a chaplain's scarf. At thirty-seven he was First Lord of the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and a Regent of the Kingdom.' The literary history of the Queen Anne age has many associations with his name. He proved a liberal patron of the wits, and of Pope among them, by subscribing largely to his *Homer;* but the poet's memory was stronger for imaginary injuries than for real benefits, and because Halifax had patronized Tickell, he figures in the Prologue to the Satires as 'full-blown Bufo, puffed by every quill.'

Prior and Montague began their rhyming career early, and a partnership production, entitled the *Hind and Panther, transversed to the story of the Country Mouse and the City Mouse* (1687), a parody of Dryden's famous poem published in the same year, brought both authors into notice. At the age of twenty-six Prior, who had previously obtained a fellowship, was appointed Secretary to the Embassy at the Hague. After that he rose steadily to eminence, became Secretary of State in Ireland, and was finally appointed Ambassador at the French Court. High office brings its troubles, and in those days was not without its perils. In 1711 Prior was sent secretly to Paris to negotiate a peace, for which, when the Whigs came again into power, he was imprisoned and expected to lose his head. While in prison, where he remained for two years (1715-1717), the poet wrote *Alma*, a humorous and speculative poem on the relations of the soul and body, and when released published his *Poems* by subscription in a noble folio, said to be the largest-sized volume in the whole range of English poetry. He gained 4,000 guineas by the publication, and with that sum and an estate purchased for him by Lord Harley, Prior was able to live in comfort. He died in September, 1721, in his fifty-eighth year, and was buried in Westminster Abbey,

under a monument for which he had had the vanity to pay five hundred pounds.

The peculiar merit of Prior is better understood in our day than it was in his own. We read his poems solely for the sake of the 'lighter pieces,' which Johnson despised. The poet thought *Solomon* his best work, but no one who toils through the three books which form that poem is likely to agree with this estimate. Dulness pervades the work like an atmosphere, but it had its admirers in the last century, and among them was John Wesley, who, in reply to Johnson's complaint of its tediousness, said he should as soon think of calling the Second or Sixth Æneid tedious. In the preface to the poem Prior declares that he "had rather be thought a good Englishman than the best poet or greatest scholar that ever wrote," a passage which does more honour to the poet than any in the text. A far more popular piece was *Henry and Emma*, which even so fine a judge of poetry as Cowper called 'inimitable.' Tastes change, let us hope for the better, and possibly none but the greatest poets remain unaffected by time. Assuredly Prior does not, and *Henry and Emma* affords a striking illustration of the contrast between the poetical spirit of Prior's age and that which influences ours. The poem is founded on the fine ballad of the *Nut-Browne Maide*. The story, as originally told, is homely and quaint, written without apparent effort and told in 360 lines. Prior requires considerably more than twice that number, and his maid and her lover, instead of using the simple language befitting the theme, employ the conventional machinery of the age, and bring Jove and Mars, Cupid and Venus upon the scene, with allusions to Marlborough's victories and to 'Anna's wondrous reign.'

Alma, a poem written in Hudibrastic verse, which shows that Prior had in a measure caught the vein of Butler, has

some couplets familiar in quotations. He won, too, not a little contemporary reputation for his tales in verse, which are singularly coarse; but an age that tolerated Mrs. Manley and read the plays and novels of Aphra Behn was not likely to object to the grossness of Prior. Dr. Johnson would not admit that his poems were unfit for a lady's table, and Wesley, who appears to have been strangely oblivious to Prior's moral delinquencies, observes that his tales are the best told of any in the English tongue. Cowper praised him for his 'charming ease,' and this gift enabled him to write some of the most delightful occasional verses produced in the century. There is nothing more exquisite of its kind than his address, *To a Child of Quality*, written when the child was five years old and the poet forty, and one is not surprised to learn that Prior was admired by Thomas Moore, who more than once caught his note. A reader familiar with Moore and ignorant of Prior would without hesitation attribute the following stanzas, from the *Answer to Chloe Jealous*, to the Irish poet:

'The god of us versemen (you know, Child), the sun,
How after his journeys he sets up his rest;
If at morning o'er earth 'tis his fancy to run,
At night he declines on his Thetis's breast.

'So when I am wearied with wandering all day,
To thee, my delight, in the evening I come;
No matter what beauties I saw in my way;
They were but my visits, but thou art my home.

'Then finish, dear Cloe, this pastoral war,
And let us, like Horace and Lydia, agree;
For thou art a girl as much brighter than her
As he was a poet sublimer than me.'

"The grammatical lapse in these last two lines," says Mr. Austin Dobson, "perhaps calls for correction, but many readers will probably agree with Moore (*Diary*, November,

1818), 'that it is far prettier as it is.' 'Nothing,' he says truly, 'can be more gracefully light and gallant than this little poem.'"

It was fancy and not imagination which conceived the following lines, but how charming is the fancy! The poem, which is given in a slightly abridged form, is addressed

'TO A LADY: SHE REFUSING TO CONTINUE A DISPUTE WITH ME, AND LEAVING ME IN THE ARGUMENT.

'In the dispute whate'er I said,
My heart was by my tongue belied;
And in my looks you might have read
How much I argued on your side.

'You, far from danger as from fear,
Might have sustained an open fight;
For seldom your opinions err;
Your eyes are always in the right.

'Alas! not hoping to subdue,
I only to the fight aspired;
To keep the beauteous foe in view
Was all the glory I desired.

'But she, howe'er of victory sure,
Contemns the wreath too long delayed;
And, armed with more immediate power,
Calls cruel silence to her aid.

'Deeper to wound, she shuns the fight:
She drops her arms, to gain the field;
Secures her conquest by her flight;
And triumphs, when she seems to yield.

'So when the Parthian turned his steed,
And from the hostile camp withdrew;
With cruel skill the backward reed
He sent; and as he fled, he slew.'

Wit and a ready command of verse are the characteristics of Prior's poetry. Both of these gifts are to be seen in his

lively *English ballad on the Taking of Namur by the King of Great Britain*, in which he travesties Boileau's *Ode sur la prise de Namur*. As an epigrammatist he reaped his advantage from a study of Martial, and in this department of verse Prior is often successful. If brevity be a prominent merit in an epigram, he sometimes excels his master, as, for example, in this stanza:

> 'To John I owed great obligation;
> But John unhappily thought fit
> To publish it to all the nation;
> Sure John and I are more than quit.'[1]

This is half the length of the original Latin, and what it loses in elegance it gains in point.

It may be hoped that the next quotation is a libel on Bishop Atterbury; if so, the lines have every merit but truth. The epigram is on the funeral of the Duke of Buckingham, who died in 1721.

> 'I have no hopes,' the duke he says, and dies;
> 'In sure and certain hopes,' the prelate cries:
> Of these two learned peers, I prithee say, man,
> Who is the lying knave, the priest or layman?
> The duke he stands an infidel confest;
> 'He's our dear brother,' quoth the lordly priest.
> The duke, though knave, still 'brother dear,' he cries;
> And who can say the reverend prelate lies?

Prior, it may be observed here, could say pointed things in prose as well as in verse, and nothing can be happier than his reply to the Frenchman's inquiry whether the King of England had anything to show in his palace equal to the paintings at Versailles illustrating the victories of Louis XIV: 'The monuments of my master's actions,' said the poet, 'are to be seen everywhere except in his own house.'

It is always interesting to link poet with poet, and in

[1] See *Martialis Epigrammata*, book v. lii.

relation to Prior many readers will recall the pathetic incident related of Sir Walter Scott when the wonderful intellect which had entranced the world was giving indications of decay. Lockhart relates how, as they were travelling together, a quotation from Prior led Scott to make another, slightly altered for the occasion, and he adds:

'This seemed to put him into the train of Prior, and he repeated several striking passages both of the *Alma* and the *Solomon*. He was still at this when we reached a longish hill, and he got out to walk a little. As we climbed the ascent, he leaning heavily on my shoulder, we were met by a couple of beggars, who were, or professed to be, old soldiers both of Egypt and the Peninsula. One of them wanted a leg, which circumstance alone would have opened Scott's purse-strings, though, *ex facie*, a sad old blackguard; but the fellow had recognized his person as it happened, and in asking an alms bade God bless him fervently by his name. The mendicants went on their way, and we stood breathing on the knoll. Sir Walter followed them with his eye, and planting his stick firmly on the sod, repeated, without break or hesitation Prior's verses to the historian Mezeray. That he applied them to himself was touchingly obvious, and therefore I must quote them.

'"Whate'er thy countrymen have done,
By law and wit, by sword and gun,
In thee is faithfully recited;
And all the living world that view
Thy work, give thee the praises due,
At once instructed and delighted.

'"Yet for the fame of all these deeds,
What beggar in the *Invalides*,
With lameness broke, with blindness smitten,
Wished ever decently to die,
To have been either Mezeray,
Or any monarch he has written?

'"It strange, dear author, yet it true is,
That down from Pharamond to Louis
All covet life, yet call it pain:
All feel the ill, yet shun the cure;
Can sense this paradox endure?
Resolve me Cambray[1] or Fontaine.

'"The man in graver tragic known
(Though his best part long since was done),
Still on the stage desires to tarry;
And he who played the Harlequin,
After the jest still loads the scene,
Unwilling to retire, though weary."'

John Gay (1685-1732).

Gay, who enjoyed an unbroken friendship with the brotherhood of wits, and was treated by them like a spoilt child, was born at Barnstaple in 1685, and left an orphan at the age of ten. He was educated at the free grammar school in the town, and was afterwards, to his discontent, apprenticed to a mercer in London. He escaped from this uncongenial employment to be dependent on an uncle, and thus early exhibited his life-long disposition to rely upon others for support. 'Providence,' Swift writes, 'never designed Gay to be above two-and-twenty by his thoughtlessness and gullibility. He has as little foresight of age, sickness, poverty, or loss of admirers as a girl of fifteen.' His weakness, it has been said, appealed to Swift's strength, and Swift, Pope, and Arbuthnot were Gay's most faithful friends. They found something in him to laugh at and to love. Ladies, too, treated him with the kind of friendliness which has a touch of commiseration. In 1714 Gay was appointed secretary to Lord Clarendon, a post which he owed to Swift, but the death of Queen Anne in that year brought the Whigs into office, and destroyed the

[1] Fénelon was Archbishop of Cambray.

poet's prospects. Prior to this he had been secretary to the imperious Duchess of Monmouth. He was now left without money or employment, and owed much to the generosity of Pope. It was Gay's lot 'in suing long to bide,' to be always hoping, and nearly always disappointed. 'He seems,' says his latest biographer, 'to have begun his career under the impression that it was somebody's duty to provide for him in the world, and this impression clung to him through nearly the whole of a lifetime.'[1] Ten years before his death he was eagerly looking to others for support. Writing to Swift, he says: 'I lodge at present in Burlington House, and have received many civilities from many great men, but very few real benefits. They wonder at each other for not providing for me, and I wonder at them all.'

Gay's first poem of any mark was *The Shepherd's Week* (1714), six burlesque pastorals, a subject proposed to him by Pope, who was then smarting from the praise Philips had received in *The Guardian*. But if Pope meant Gay to poke his fun at Philips in *The Shepherd's Week*, he must have been disappointed, for the poems were accepted as genuine bucolics, and although humorously absurd, are, to say the least, more true to rustic life than the pastorals either of Philips or of Pope. *The Shepherd's Week* was followed by *Trivia* (1715), a piece suggested by Swift's *City Shower*. It is one of Gay's most notable productions, not as a poem, but as a vivid description of the streets of London nearly two hundred years ago. The great reputation he obtained as the author of *The Fables* (1727), and still more of *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), the idea of which was suggested to Gay by Swift, survived him for some years. *The Fables* were written for and dedicated to

[1] *The Poetical Works of Gay*, edited, with Life and Notes, by John Underhill, 2 vols.

the youthful Duke of Cumberland, who is asked to "accept the moral lay, and in these tales mankind survey." There is skill and ingenuity in the poems, but higher merit they cannot boast, and young readers are likely to prefer the illustrations which generally accompany *The Fables* to the letterpress. Many of Gay's allusions are beyond the apprehension of the young, and have a political flavour. *The Beggar's Opera* was intended as a burlesque of the Italian opera, which had been long the laughing-stock of men of letters, and as the play was thought to have political significance, and the character of Macheath to be a portrait of Walpole, it was received with enthusiasm, and acted in London for about sixty nights. So popular did the opera become, that ladies carried about the songs on their fans.

Eight years before, Gay had published his poems by subscription, and in those happy days for versemen had gained £1,000 by the venture. He put the money into South Sea stock, and lost it all. For *The Beggar's Opera* he received about £800. It was followed by *Polly*, a play of the same coarse character, which, for political reasons, was not allowed to be acted. The result was that it had a large sale, and put money in Gay's purse. Ten thousand five hundred copies are said to have been printed in one year, and the £1,200 realized by the sale were very wisely retained for the poet's use by the Duke of Queensberry, under whose roof he had at length found a warm nest. To the student Gay is chiefly interesting as the only noteworthy poet of the period, south of the Tweed, gifted with a lyrical capacity. Two or three of his songs and ballads, and especially *Black-Eyed Susan*, have a charm beyond the reach of the mechanical versifier. But the art of song is at a low level even in the hands of Gay. The lyric which the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets loved so well, and of which the present century has produced speci-

mens to be matched only by Shakespeare, may be said to have been lost to English poetry for the first half of the last century, since neither Prior's verse, delightful though it be, nor the songs of Gay, have enough of the poetical element to form exceptions to this statement.

In his *Tales* he follows Prior in grossness, while inferior to him in art. Like the greater number of the Queen Anne poets, Gay flatters with a free hand. In an epistle addressed to Lintot, the bookseller, he declares that Anacreon lives once more in Sheffield, and Waller in Granville, that Buckingham's verse will last to distant time; while Ovid sings again in Addison, and 'Homer's *Iliad* shines in his *Campaign*.'

One of the liveliest and most graceful of Gay's poems is addressed to Pope 'On his having finished his translation of Homer's *Iliad*.' It is called *A Welcome from Greece*, and describes the friends who assembled to greet the poet on his return to England.

Three stanzas from the Epistle shall be quoted:

'Oh, what a concourse swarms on yonder quay!
The sky re-echoes with new shouts of joy;
By all this show, I ween 'tis Lord Mayor's day;
I hear the voice of trumpet and hautboy—
No, now I see them near.—Oh, these are they
Who come in crowds to welcome thee from Troy.
Hail to the bard, whom long as lost we mourned
From siege, from battle, and from storm returned!

'What lady's that to whom he gently bends?
Who knows not her? Ah! those are Wortley's eyes:
How art thou honoured, numbered with her friends!
For she distinguishes the good and wise.
The sweet-tongued Murray near her side attends;
Now to my heart the glance of Howard flies;
Now Hervey, fair of face, I mark full well,
With thee Youth's youngest daughter, sweet Lepell.

'I see two lovely sisters hand in hand,
The fair-haired Martha and Teresa brown;
Madge Bellenden, the tallest of the land;
And smiling Mary, soft and fair as down.
Yonder I see the cheerful Duchess stand,
For friendship, zeal, and blithesome humours known;
Whence that loud shout in such a hearty strain?
Why, all the Hamiltons are in her train!'

Gay's love of good living was known to all his friends. 'As the French philosopher,' Congreve wrote, 'used to prove his existence by *cogito ergo sum*, the greatest proof of Gay's existence is *edit ergo est*.' For a long time his health compelled him to give up wine, and he tells Swift that he had also left off verse-making, 'for I really think that man must be a bold writer who trusts to wit without it.' He was dispirited, he told Swift not long before his death, for want of a pursuit, and found 'indolence and idleness the most tiresome things in the world.'

Gay died in 1732 at the Duke of Queensberry's house, and Pope grieved that one of his nearest and longest ties was broken. He was interred, to quote Arbuthnot's words, 'as a peer of the realm,' in Westminster Abbey. The superficial character of the poet may be seen in his couplet transcribed upon the monument:

'Life is a jest, and all things show it;
I thought so once, and now I know it.'

Edward Young (1684-1765).

Gay's moderate gift of song was withheld from the famous author of the *Night Thoughts*. Yet Young was vain enough to think that he possessed it, and wrote a patriotic ode called *Ocean*, preceded by an elaborate essay on lyric poetry. He also produced *Imperium Pelagi* (1729), *A Naval Lyric written in Imitation of Pindar's spirit*. The lyric,

which was travestied by Fielding in his *Tom Thumb*,[1] reads like a burlesque, and badly treated though Pindar was by the versemen of the last century, there is perhaps not one of them who mocks him more outrageously than Young. He says that this ode is an original, and no critic is likely to dispute the assertion.

Young was born in 1684 at Upham, near Winchester, his father, who was afterwards Dean of Sarum, being at that time the rector of the village. Edward was placed upon the foundation at Winchester College, and remained there until he was eighteen. He was then sent up to New College, and afterwards removed to Corpus. At the age of twenty-seven he was nominated to a law fellowship at All Souls, and took his degree of B.C.L. and his doctor's degree some years later. Characteristically enough he began his poetical career by *An Epistle to Lord Lansdowne* (1712), who is praised for his heavenly numbers, and is said to have been born "to make the muse immortal." His next poem of any consequence, *The Last Day*, written in heroic couplets, and filling three books, is correct, or fairly so, in versification, and execrable in taste. Young, it may be supposed, wished to produce a sense of solemnity in the treatment of his theme, and he does so by lamenting that the very land 'where the Stuarts filled an awful throne' will in that day be forgotten. The want of taste which so often deforms Young's verse is also seen in the imagery he employs to illustrate the fear which

[1] 'I'll swim through seas; I'll ride upon the clouds;
I'll dig the earth; I'll blow out every fire;
I'll rave; I'll rant; I'll rise; I'll rush; I'll war;
Fierce as the man whom smiling dolphins bore
From the prosaic to poetic shore.
I'll tear the scoundrel into twenty pieces.'

'The reader,' Fielding adds in a note, 'may see all the beauties of this speech in a late ode called a *Naval Lyric*.'

even good men may have on appearing before that 'dread tribunal.'

> 'Thus the chaste bridegroom, when the priest draws nigh,
> Beholds his blessing with a trembling eye;
> Feels doubtful passions throb in every vein,
> And in his cheeks are mingled joy and pain,
> Lest still some intervening chance should rise,
> Leap forth at once, and snatch the golden prize,
> Inflame his woe, by bringing it so late,
> And stab him in the crisis of his fate.'

His next poem, *The Force of Religion, or Vanquished Love*, was suggested by the execution of Lady Jane Grey and Lord Guildford, a subject chosen for a tragedy by John Banks (1694), by Rowe in 1715, and treated with considerable dramatic power in our own day by Ross Neil. In Young's hands this fine theme becomes a rhetorical exercise without poetry and without pathos. A few lines will suffice to show the style of the poem. Jane and Dudley, it must be premised, are imprisoned in a gloomy hall:

> 'What can they do? They fix their mournful eyes—
> Then Guildford, thus abruptly: "I despise
> An empire lost; I fling away the crown;
> Numbers have laid that bright delusion down;
> But where's the Charles, or Dioclesian, where,
> Could quit the blooming, wedded, weeping fair?
> Oh! to dwell ever on thy lip! to stand
> In full possession of thy snowy hand!
> And thro' the unclouded crystal of thine eye
> The heavenly treasures of thy mind to spy!
> Till rapture reason happily destroys,
> And my soul wanders through immortal joys!
> Give me the world, and ask me, where's my bliss?
> I clasp thee to my breast and answer, this."'

Verse of this quality, which might be amply quoted, is of interest to the student of literature, since in Young's day it passed current for poetry. But in accepting his

claims as a poet the faith of the age must have been often strained.

Walpole, who despised the whole tribe of poets, and cared nothing for literature, had by some strange chance awarded to Young a pension of £200 a-year, whereupon in a piece called *The Instalment*, addressed to Sir Robert, Britain is called upon to behold

> 'His azure ribbon and his radiant star,'

and the poet's breast 'glows with grateful fire' as he exclaims:

> 'The streams of royal bounty turned by thee
> Refresh the dry domains of poesy.
> My fortune shows, when arts are Walpole's care,
> What slender worth forbids us to despair:
> Be this thy partial smile from censure free,
> 'Twas meant for merit, though it fell on me.'

Following in the steps of George Sandys, but with inferior power, and in a less racy diction, Young performed the vain task of paraphrasing part of the Book of Job, one of the noblest poems the world possesses, and translated in our authorized version in language not to be surpassed for dignity and simplicity.

In 1719 his *Busiris* was performed. *The Revenge*, a better known tragedy, written on the French model, followed in 1721, and kept the stage for some time. Seven years later *The Brothers*, his third and last tragedy, was in rehearsal, but the poet, who had lately taken holy orders, withdrew it at the last moment. These tragedies, which are full of sound and fury, are destitute of tragic power. *The Revenge*, in which Zanga acts the part of an Iago, has some forcible scenes, and so, despite much rant and fustian, has *Busiris*. Plenty of blood is shed, of course, and the heroines of the plays die by their own hands. Tragedy is supposed to exercise an elevating in-

fluence, but to counteract this happy result. *Busiris* and *The Revenge* are followed by indecent epilogues, in which the speakers jest at the feelings which the plays may have excited. For *The Brothers* Young wrote his own epilogue. It is decent and dull. His genius was better fitted for satire than for the drama, and *The Universal Passion*, which consists of seven satires published in a collected form in 1728, brought him reputation and money. The poet Crabbe was never more surprised in his life than when John Murray (the famous 'My Murray' of Byron) gave him £3,000 for the copyright of his poems; Young received the same sum for work immeasurably inferior in value, and in a less legitimate way. Two thousand pounds, it is stated, was a gift from the Duke of Grafton, who said it was the best bargain he ever made, as the satires were worth £4,000. Young, it will be seen, preceded Pope as a satirist. He is more generous and humane, and has none of the venomous attacks on living persons by which Pope added piquancy to his verse. But he is a careless writer, and for the most part lacks the exquisite precision, the subtle wit, the rhythmical felicity, which make the couplets of Pope so memorable. *The Dunciad*, the *Moral Essays*, and the *Imitations* are read by all lovers of literature, but *The Universal Passion* is forgotten. Of the six satires, the two on women are the most spirited, and may be compared with Pope's on the same subject. The different foibles, and faults worse than foibles of the women of that day are exhibited with a satirist's licence, and occasionally with a Pope like terseness. Take the following, for example:

> 'There is no woman where there's no reserve,
> And 'tis on plenty your poor lovers starve.'
>
> 'Few to good breeding make a just pretence;
> Good breeding is the blossom of good sense.'

'A shameless woman is the worst of men.'

'Naked in nothing should a woman be,
But veil her very wit with modesty.'

It was not until he was nearly fifty that Young, disappointed of the preferment he sought, took holy orders, and in 1730 accepted the college living of Welwyn, in Herts, which he held till his death.

In the following year the poet married Lady Elizabeth Lee, a daughter of the Earl of Lichfield, a union that lasted ten years. One son was the offspring of this marriage. Lady Elizabeth had a daughter by a former marriage, who was married to Mr. Temple, a son of Lord Palmerston, and shortly before her own death she lost both daughter and son-in-law, who, there can be little doubt, are the Philander and Narcissa of the *Night Thoughts*, the earlier books of which were published in 1742. This once celebrated poem, written in his old age, is the one effort of Young's genius that has enjoyed a great popularity. It suited well an age which, while far from moral, delighted in moral treatises and in didactic verse. In the *Night Thoughts* Young remembers that he is a clergyman, and puts on his gown and bands. He puts on also his singing robes, and shows the reader what none of his earlier poems prove, that he is in the presence of a poet.

The *Night Thoughts* is remarkable in its finest passages for a strong, but sombre imagination, and for a command of his instrument that puts Young at times nearly on a level with the greatest masters of blank verse. On this height, however, he does not stay long. He is rich in great thoughts, but they do not fall unconsciously, as it were, while the poet pursues his argument. They are aphorisms uttered generally in single lines which are apt to break the continuity of the poem and to injure the harmony of its

versification. The theme of Life, Death, and Immortality is not a narrow one, and affords ample space for imaginative treatment. Young's treatment of it is too often declamatory; he drops the poet in the rhetorician and the wit. There is much of the false sublime in the poem, and much that reveals the hollow character of the writer. The first book is the finest, sparkling with felicitous expressions and rising frequently to true poetry. The poetical quality of that book, however, is lessened by the author's passion for antithesis. The merit of the following passage, for example, is not due to poetical inspiration:

> 'How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
> How complicate, how wonderful is man!
> How passing wonder He, who made him such!
> Who centered in our make such strange extremes
> From different natures, marvellously mixed,
> Connexion exquisite of distant worlds!
> Distinguished link in being's endless chain!
> Midway from nothing to the Deity;
> A beam etherial, sullied, and absorbt!
> Though sullied and dishonoured still divine!
> Dim miniature of greatness absolute!
> An heir of glory! a frail child of dust!
> Helpless immortal! insect infinite!
> A worm! a god!—I tremble at myself,
> And in myself am lost. At home a stranger,
> Thought wanders up and down, surprised, aghast,
> And wondering at her own: How reason reels!
> O what a miracle to man is man!
> Triumphantly distressed! what joy! what dread!
> Alternately transported and alarmed!
> What can preserve my life? or what destroy?
> An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave:
> Legions of angels can't confine me there.'

The opening of the ninth and last book will give a more favourable illustration of Young's style:

'As when a traveller, a long day past
In painful search of what he cannot find,
At night's approach, content with the next cot,
There ruminates awhile, his labour lost;
Then cheers his heart with what his fate affords,
And chants his sonnet to deceive the time,
Till the due season calls him to repose;
Thus I, long-travelled in the ways of men,
And dancing with the rest the giddy maze
Where Disappointment smiles at Hope's career;
Warned by the languor of life's evening ray,
At length have housed me in an humble shed,
Where, future wandering banished from my thought,
And waiting, patient, the sweet hour of rest,
I chase the moments with a serious song.
Song soothes our pains, and age has pains to soothe.'

While moralizing on man's mortality Young is seldom a cheerful monitor, he dwells with too great persistence on the incidents of death and of bodily corruption, too little on life with which we have more to do than with death Thus with a strange perversion he exclaims:

'This is the desart, this the solitude,
How populous, how vital, is the grave!
This is creation's melancholy vault,
The vale funereal, the sad cypress gloom,
The land of apparitions, empty shades!
All, all on earth is shadow, all beyond
Is substance; the reverse is folly's creed.'

and harping on the same theme in the ninth book, says:

'What is the world itself? Thy world—a grave.
Where is the dust that has not been alive?
The spade, the plough, disturb our ancestors;
From human mould we reap our daily bread;
The globe around earth's hollow surface shakes,
And is the ceiling of her sleeping sons.
O'er devastation we blind revels keep;
Whole buried towns support the dancer's heel.'

Robert Blair (1699-1746).

On laying down the *Night Thoughts* the student may be advised to read Blair's *Grave*, a poem in less than 800 lines of blank verse, composed in a fresher and more vigorous style than the far larger work of Young, and rather moulded, as Mr. Saintsbury has observed, upon dramatic than upon purely poetical models.' *The Grave*, which was written before the publication of the *Night Thoughts*,[1] abounds with poetical felicities, and is pregnant with suggestions that seize the imagination, and appeal alike to the intellect and the heart. The brevity of the piece is in its favour; there is not a line that flags.

> 'Tell us, ye dead! will none of you, in pity
> To those you left behind, disclose the secret?
> Oh! that some courteous ghost would blab it out,—
> What 'tis you are and we must shortly be.
> I've heard that souls departed have sometimes
> Forewarned men of their death. 'Twas kindly done
> To knock and give the alarm. But what means
> This stinted charity? 'Tis but lame kindness
> That does its work by halves. Why might you not
> Tell us what 'tis to die? Do the strict laws
> Of your society forbid your speaking
> Upon a point so nice?—I'll ask no more:
> Sullen, like lamps in sepulchres, your shine
> Enlightens but yourselves. Well, 'tis no matter;
> A very little time will clear up all,
> And make us learn'd as you are, and as close.'

[1] Written but not published. The earlier books of the *Night Thoughts* appeared in 1742, the *Grave* in 1743, but in a letter dated Feb. 25th, 1741-2, Blair in transmitting the MS. of the poem to a friend states that the greater portion of it was composed several years before his ordination ten years previously. Southey states that Blair's *Grave* is the only poem he could call to mind composed in imitation of the *Night Thoughts*, but the style as well as the date contradicts this judgment.

Blair, who was a Scotch clergyman, wrote also an *Elegy in Memory of William Law*, a Professor of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh, whose daughter he married. He writes in a masculine and homely style. His imagery is often more powerful than pleasing, but some of his similes win attention by their beauty. For example:

> "Look how the fair one weeps! the conscious tears
> Stand thick as dewdrops on the bells of flowers."

Among the victims claimed by the grave is

> 'The long demurring maid,
> Whose lonely unappropriated sweets
> Smiled, like yon knot of cowslips on the cliff,
> Not to be come at by the willing hand.'

And the death of a good man is pictured in this musical couplet:

> 'Night dews fall not more gently to the ground
> Nor weary worn out winds expire so soft.'

Cowper, referring to the poets of his century, said that every warbler had Pope's tune by heart. But if they had the tune by heart, many of them did not make it a vehicle for their verse, and among these are poets of the weight and worth of Thomson and Young, of Gray and Collins. Poets of a minor order, too, such as Somerville, Armstrong, Glover, Shenstone, Akenside, and John Dyer, either did not use the heroic distich which Pope crowned with such honour, or used it in their least significant poems.

James Thomson (1700-1748).

Thomson's influence, though less visible than Pope's, was probably as great. It was felt by the poets who loved Nature, and had no turn for satire. To pass to him from Prior, Gay, and Young is to leave the town for the

country. English poetry owes much to the author of *The Seasons*, who was the first among the poets of his century to bring men back to 'Nature, the Vicar of the Almighty Lord.' He could not, indeed, shake off altogether the fetters of the conventional diction current in his day, and his style is often turgid and verbose. But Thomson had, to use a phrase of his own, 'a fine flame of imagination,' and when brought face to face with Nature he has the inspiration of a poet who discerns the lessons which Nature is ready to teach.

James Thomson was born at Ednam, on the banks of the Tweed, on September 11th, 1700, but his father removed to Jedburgh shortly afterwards, and there the future poet gained his first impression of rural scenes. He began to rhyme in boyhood, but, unlike most young poets, had the good sense to make an annual bonfire of his youthful effusions. At the early age of fifteen he was sent to the university at Edinburgh, his father, who was a Presbyterian minister, wishing that his son should follow the same vocation. But Thomson was not destined to 'wag his head in a pulpit.' He had a friend at this time in David Mallet, a minor poet of more prudence than principle, and when Mallet had the good fortune to gain a tutorship in London, his companion also started for the metropolis in search of money and fame. It was a desperate venture, and the young poet's difficulties were increased by the loss of his letters of introduction. Scotchmen however have always countrymen willing to help them, and Thomson whose pedigree on the mother's side connected him with the famous house of Home, found temporary employment as tutor to a child of Lord Binning who belonged by marriage to the same family. Afterwards he resided with Millan, a bookseller at Charing Cross, and then having finished *Winter* (1726), on which he had been at work for some

time, he sold it to the publisher for three guineas. Before long it was read and warmly praised by Aaron Hill, then a man of mark in the world of letters. Sir Spencer Compton, the Speaker, to whom the poem was dedicated, gave the poet twenty guineas for the compliment; Rundle, the Bishop of Derry, and several ladies of rank cheered him with their praise, and Thomson's success was assured. It was the age of patrons, and he practised without shame and without discrimination the art of flattery. Each book of *The Seasons* had a dedication, and the honour was one for which some kind of payment was expected. *Summer* appeared in 1727 and *Spring* in the year following. In 1729 the appearance of *Britannia* showed the popularity of the poet and of his theme, for three editions were sold. It is a distinctly party poem, and contains an attack upon Walpole—whom he had previously praised as the 'most illustrious of patriots'—for submitting to indignities from Spain. The British Lion roars loudly in it, but there is more of fustian in the piece than of true patriotism. 'How dares,' the poet exclaims, 'the proud Iberian rouse to wrath the masters of the main:'

> 'Who told him that the big incumbent war
> Would not ere this have rolled his trembling ports
> In smoky ruin? and his guilty stores,
> Won by the ravage of a butchered world,
> Yet unatoned, sunk in the swallowing deep,
> Or led the glittering prize into the Thames?'

In February, 1729-30, Thomson's tragedy of *Sophonisba*, a subject previously chosen by Marston (1606), and by Lee (1676), was acted at Drury Lane. The play was dedicated to the queen, and on the opening night the house was crowded, but the success of the piece was slight. Thomson's genius was not dramatic, and while his characters declaim,

they do not act. His next play, *Agamemnon* (1738), was not lost for want of labour or of friends. Pope appeared in the theatre on the first night, and was greeted with applause. The Prince and Princess of Wales were present on another occasion, but the play did not live long. His third attempt, *Edward and Eleanora*, was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain, since it was supposed to praise the Prince of Wales at the expense of the Court. In 1740 the *Masque of Alfred*, by Thomson and Mallet, was performed. *Tancred and Sigismunda* followed in 1745, and this tragedy, in which Garrick played the leading part, had at the time a considerable measure of success. The plot is more interesting than that of *Sophonisba*, and the characters are more life-like. Despite its effusive sentiment, Garrick's splendid acting would, no doubt, make the tragedy effective on the stage, but it does not add to the literary reputation of the poet. *Coriolanus*, Thomson's last drama, was not performed upon the stage until the year after his death.

Voltaire, who had met Thomson and liked him—the liking, indeed, seemed to be universal—praised his tragedies for being 'elegantly writ.' 'It may be,' he says, 'that his heroes are neither moving nor busy enough, but taking him all in all, methinks he has the highest claim to the greatest esteem.' The value of Voltaire's criticism of an English dramatist is best appreciated by remembering his ignorant judgment of Shakespeare.

Thomson's laurels were gained in another field of poetry. On the production of *Autumn* in 1730, *The Seasons* in its complete form was published by subscription in quarto. The four books, as we have already said, appeared at different times, *Winter* being the first in order and *Autumn* the latest. The Hymn with which the poem concludes may be compared, and will not greatly suffer in the

comparison, with Adam's morning hymn in the fifth book of *Paradise Lost*, and with Coleridge's *Hymn in the Valley of Chamouni*. Like them it is raised, to use the poet's own words, to an 'Almighty Father.' A brief extract shall be given:

> 'His praise, ye brooks, attune, ye trembling rills;
> And let me catch it as I muse along.
> Ye headlong torrents, rapid, and profound;
> Ye softer floods, that lead the humid maze
> Along the vale; and thou, majestic main,
> A secret world of wonders in thyself,
> Sound His stupendous praise, whose greater voice
> Or bids you roar, or bids your roarings fall.
> Soft roll your incense, herbs, and fruits, and flowers,
> In mingled clouds to Him, whose sun exalts,
> Whose breath perfumes you, and whose pencil paints.
> Ye forests bend, ye harvests wave, to Him;
> Breathe your still song into the reaper's heart,
> As home he goes beneath the joyous moon.
> * * * * * *
> Great source of day! best image here below
> Of thy Creator, ever pouring wide,
> From world to world, the vital ocean round,
> On Nature write with every beam His praise.
> The thunder rolls: be hushed the prostrate world;
> While cloud to cloud returns the solemn hymn.
> Bleat out afresh, ye hills; ye mossy rocks
> Retain the sound: the broad responsive low,
> Ye valleys, raise; for the Great Shepherd reigns,
> And His unsuffering kingdom yet will come.'

Swift complains that the *Seasons*, being all descriptive, nothing is doing, a defect inseparable from the subject. But the work has a poet's best gift—imagination—and a poet's instinct for apprehending the charm of what is minute in Nature, as well as of what is grand.

Thomson has been called the naturalist's poet, and Hartley Coleridge observes that he is 'a perfect reservoir

of natural images.' In his account of what he had learnt only by report he depends sometimes on the ignorant traditions of the country people; but in describing what he observes with the bodily eye, and with the eye of the mind, he is faithful to what he sees, and to what he perceives. No Dutch painter can be more exact and accurate than Thomson in the delineation of familiar scenes, and of animal life. In illustration of this gift, which Cowper shares with him, a scene, not to be surpassed for truthfulness of description, shall be quoted from *Winter*:

> 'Through the hushed air the whitening shower descends,
> At first thin-wavering; till at last the flakes
> Fall broad and wide and fast, dimming the day
> With a continual flow. The cherished fields
> Put on their winter robe of purest white.
> 'Tis brightness all; save where the new snow melts
> Along the mazy current. Low the woods
> Bow their hoar head; and ere the languid sun,
> Faint from the west, emits his evening ray,
> Earth's universal face, deep-hid and chill,
> Is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide
> The works of man. Drooping, the labourer-ox
> Stands covered o'er with snow, and then demands
> The fruit of all his toil. The fowls of heaven,
> Tamed by the cruel season, crowd around
> The winnowing store, and claim the little boon
> Which Providence assigns them. One alone,
> The redbreast, sacred to the household gods,
> Wisely regardful of th' embroiling sky,
> In joyless fields and thorny thickets, leaves
> His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man
> His annual visit. Half afraid, he first
> Against the window beats; then brisk, alights
> On the warm hearth; then, hopping o'er the floor,
> Eyes all the smiling family askance,
> And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is—
> Till more familiar grown, the table-crumbs

Attract his slender feet. The foodless wilds
Pour forth their brown inhabitants. The hare,
Though timorous of heart and hard beset
By death in various forms, dark snares, and dogs,
And more unpitying men, the garden seeks
Urged on by fearless want. The bleating kind
Eye the bleak heaven, and next the glistening earth,
With looks of dumb despair; then, sad-dispersed
Dig for the withered herb through heaps of snow.'

Thomson loves also to paint the landscape on a broad scale, and though his diction is sometimes too florid, he generally satisfies the imagination, as, for instance, in the splendid description in *Summer* of a sand-storm in the desert.

'Breathed hot
From all the boundless furnace of the sky,
And the wide, glittering waste of burning sand,
A suffocating wind the pilgrim smites
With instant death. Patient of thirst and toil,
Son of the desert! even the camel feels,
Shot through his withered heart, the fiery blast.
Or from the black-red ether, bursting broad,
Sallies the sudden whirlwind. Straight the sands,
Commoved around, in gathering eddies play;
Nearer and nearer still they darkening come;
Till with the general all-involving storm
Swept up, the whole continuous wilds arise;
And by their noonday fount dejected thrown,
Or sunk at night in sad disastrous sleep,
Beneath descending hills, the caravan
Is buried deep. In Cairo's crowded streets
The impatient merchant, wondering, waits in vain,
And Mecca saddens at the long delay.'

The *Seasons* was at one time, and for many years the most popular volume of poetry in the country. It was to be found in every cottage, and passages from the poem were familiar to every school-boy. The appreciation of

the work was more affectionate than critical, and Thomson's faults were sometimes mistaken for beauties; but the popularity of the *Seasons* was a healthy sign, and the poem, a forerunner of Cowper's *Task*, brought into vigorous life, feelings and sympathies that had been long dormant.

Pope, who is twice mentioned in the poem, took a great interest in its progress through the press. Thomson consulted him frequently, and accepted many of his suggestions, while apparently retaining at all times an independent judgment. To the familiar episode of 'the lovely young Lavinia' the following graceful passage is said, but on very doubtful authority to have been added by Pope.[1] The first line, given for the sake of the context, is from Thomson's pen:

> 'Thoughtless of beauty, she was Beauty's self,
> Recluse amid the close-embowering woods;
> As in the hollow breast of Apennine,
> Beneath the shelter of encircling hills,
> A myrtle rises, far from human eye,
> And breathes its balmy fragrance o'er the wild;
> So flourished, blooming and unseen by all,
> The sweet Lavinia; till, at length, compelled
> By strong necessity's supreme command
> With smiling patience in her looks she went
> To glean Palemon's fields.'

Thomson had now gained the highest mark of his fame, and, like Pope, had won it in a few years. Nearly two years of foreign travel followed, the poet having obtained

[1] The tradition is founded on a volume in the British Museum containing MS. corrections supposed to be in Pope's handwriting. It is now, however, the opinion of experts that the writing is not Pope's. If he be the author, it is the only example of blank verse which we have from his pen.

the post of governor to a son of the Solicitor-General. The fruit of this tour was a long poem in blank verse on *Liberty*, which probably gave him infinite labour, but his ascent upon this occasion of what he calls 'the barren, but delightful mountain of Parnassus,' was labour lost. It is enough to say of *Liberty*, that it contains more than three thousand lines of unreadable blank verse. Sinecures were the rewards of genius in Thomson's day, and he was made Secretary of Briefs in the Court of Chancery. He took a cottage at Richmond, within an easy walk of Pope, and the two poets met often and lived amicably.

Thomson did not enjoy his official fortune long, for his patron died, and though he might have kept his post had he applied to the Lord Chancellor, in whose gift it was, he appears to have been too lazy to do so. His friend Lyttelton in this emergency introduced him to the Prince of Wales, who, on learning that his affairs 'were in a more poetical posture than formerly,' gave him a pension of £100 a year. There was no certainty in a gift of this nature, and in about ten years it was withdrawn.

The Castle of Indolence (1748) was the latest labour of Thomson's life, and in the judgment of many critics takes precedence of *The Seasons* in poetical merit. This verdict may be questioned, but the poem, written in the Spenserian stanza, has a soothing beauty and an enchanting felicity of expression which show the poet's genius in a new light. It is unlike any poetry of that age, and when compared with *The Seasons*, the verse, as Wordsworth justly says, 'is more harmonious and the diction more pure.' All the imagery of the poem is adopted to the vague and sleepy action of the characters represented in it. It is a veritable poet's dream, which carries the reader in its earliest stanzas into 'a pleasing land of drowsy-head:'

'In lowly dale, fast by a river's side,
With woody hill o'er hill encompassed round,
A most enchanting wizard did abide,
Than whom a fiend more fell is nowhere found.
It was, I ween, a lovely spot of ground;
And there a season atween June and May
Half prankt with Spring, with Summer half embrowned,
A listless climate made, where, sooth to say,
No living wight could work, ne carèd even for play.'

There are verbal inspirations in a great poet which satisfy the ear, capture the imagination, and live in the memory for ever. Milton's pages are studded with them like stars; Gray has a few, Wordsworth many, and Keats some not to be surpassed for witchery. Of such poetically suggestive lines Thomson has his share, and although it seems unfair to remove them from their context, the excision may be made in a few cases, since they show not only that a new poet had appeared in an age of prose, but a poet of a new order, whose inspiration was felt by his successors. How poetically imaginative is Thomson's imagery of the 'meek-eyed morn, mother of dews;' of

'Ships dim discovered dropping from the clouds;'

of

'Autumn nodding o'er the yellow plain;'

of the summer wind

'Sweeping with shadowy gust the fields of corn;'

and of the Hebrid-Isles

'Placed far amid the melancholy main,'

a line which may have suggested the lovelier verse of Wordsworth descriptive of the cuckoo:

'Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides."

Thomson did not live long after the publication of *The*

Castle of Indolence. A cold caught upon the river led to a fever, which ended fatally on August 27th, 1748. He had for some years been in love with a Miss Young, the 'Amanda' of his very feeble love lyrics, and her marriage is said to have hastened his death. Men, however, do not die for love at the mature age of forty-nine, and as Thomson was 'more fat than bard beseems,' and was not always temperate in his habits, constitutional causes are more likely to have led to the poet's death than Amanda's cruelty.

Dr. Johnson says somewhere that the further authors keep apart from each other the better, and the literary squabbles of the last century afforded him good ground for the remark. It is to Thomson's credit that, like Goldsmith twenty-six years later, he died, leaving behind him many friends and not a single enemy. His fame rests upon two poems, *The Seasons* and *The Castle of Indolence*, and on a song which has gained a national reputation. Apart from *Rule Britannia*, which appeared originally in the *Masque* of *Alfred* and is spirited rather than poetical, his attempts to write lyrical poetry resulted in failure; but from his own niche in the Temple of Fame time is not likely to dislodge Thomson.

CHAPTER III.

MINOR POETS.

Sir Samuel Garth—Ambrose Philips—John Philips—Nicholas Rowe—Aaron Hill—Thomas Parnell—Thomas Tickell—William Somerville—John Dyer—William Shenstone—Mark Akenside—David Mallet—Scottish Song-Writers.

Sir Samuel Garth (1660-1717-18).

In Pope's day even the medical profession was influenced by party feeling, and Samuel Garth became known as the most famous Whig physician, but his friendships were not confined to one side, and he appears to have been universally beloved.

Garth came of a Yorkshire family, and was born in 1660. He was admitted a Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1693, gained a large practice, and is said to have been very benevolent to the poor. The *Dispensary* (1699) is a satire called forth by the opposition of the Society of Apothecaries, to an edict of the College, and is a mock-heroic poem, which the quarrel made so effective at the time that it passed through several editions. The merit of achieving what the satirist intended may therefore be granted to the *Dispensary*. Few modern readers, however, will appreciate the welcome it received, and it is ludicrous to read in Anderson's edition of the poet that the poem 'is only inferior in humour, discrimination of character, and poetical ardour to the *Rape of the Lock*.' It would be far more accurate to say that the *Dispensary* has not a single merit in common with that poem, and but slight merit of any kind.

The following passage upon death is the most vigorous,

and is interesting as having supplied Cowper with a line in the poem on his Mother's Picture:[1]

> 'Tis to the vulgar Death too harsh appears,
> The ill we feel is only in our fears;
> To die is landing on some silent shore
> Where billows never break, nor tempests roar;
> Ere well we feel th' friendly stroke 'tis o'er.
> The wise through thought th' insults of death defy,
> The fools through blest insensibility.
> 'Tis what the guilty fear, the pious crave;
> Sought by the wretch and vanquished by the brave.
> It eases lovers, sets the captive free,
> And though a tyrant, offers liberty.'

Addison in defending Garth in the *Whig-Examiner* from the criticisms of Prior in the *Examiner*, the organ of the Tory party, says he does not question but the author 'who has endeavoured to prove that he who wrote the *Dispensary* was no poet, will very suddenly undertake to show that he who gained the battle of *Blenheim* is no general.' The comparison was an unfortunate one. Marlborough's military reputation has grown brighter with time, Garth's fame as a poet has long ago ceased to exist.

A literary although not a poetical interest is associated with the name of "well-natured Garth," who, as Pope acknowledges, was one of his earliest friends; like Arbuthnot, he lived among the wits, and as a member of the famous Kit-cat Club he wrote verses upon the Whig beauties toasted by its members. His name is linked with Dryden's as well as with that of his illustrious successor. It will be remembered how, on the death of Dryden, the poet's body lay in state in the College of Phy-

[1] Cowper's line,

> 'Where tempests never beat nor billows roar,'

is not an improvement upon Garth's. Tempests, it has been justly said, do not beat.

sicians, and how, before the great procession started for Westminster Abbey, Sir Samuel, who was then President, delivered a Latin oration.

Garth died in January, 1717-18, and, according to Pope, was a good Christian without knowing it. Addison, however, who visited Garth in his last illness, told Dr. Berkeley that he rejected Christianity on the assurance of his friend Halley that its doctrines were incomprehensible, and the religion itself an imposture. According to another report which comes through Pope, he actually 'died a papist.'

Ambrose Philips (1671-1749).

Ambrose Philips, who belonged, like Tickell, to Addison's 'little senate,' was born in 1671, and educated at St. John's, Cambridge. His *Pastorals* were published in Tonson's *Miscellany* (1709), and the same volume contained the *Pastorals* of Pope. Log-rolling was understood in those days, and Philips's verses received warm praise in more than one number of the *Guardian*, the writer in one place declaring that there have been only four masters of the art in above two thousand years: 'Theocritus, who left his dominions to Virgil; Virgil, who left his to his son Spenser; and Spenser, who was succeeded by his eldest born, Philips.'

Pope's *Pastorals* were not mentioned, and in revenge he devised the consummate artifice of sending an anonymous paper to the *Guardian*, in which, while appearing to praise Philips, he exalted himself. Steele took the bait, and considering that the essay depreciated Pope would not publish it without his permission, which was of course readily granted. 'From that time,' says Johnson, 'Pope and Philips lived in a perpetual reciprocation of malevolence.'

Philips's tragedy, *The Distrest Mother* (1712), a translation, or nearly so, of Racine's *Andromaque*, was puffed in the *Spectator*. It is the play to which Sir Roger de Coverley was taken by his friends, and the representa-

tion supplied the good knight with an opportunity for much humorous comment.

'When Sir Roger saw Andromache's obstinate refusal to her lover's importunities, he whispered me in the ear that he was sure she would never have him; to which he added with a more than ordinary vehemence, "You cannot imagine, sir, what it is to have to do with a widow." Upon Pyrrhus his threatening afterwards to leave her, the knight shook his head, and muttered to himself, "Ay, do if you can." This part dwelt so much upon my friend's imagination that at the close of the third Act, as I was thinking of something else, he whispered in my ear, "These widows, sir, are the most perverse creatures in the world. But pray," says he, "you that are a critic, is this play according to your dramatic rules, as you call them? Should your people in tragedy always talk to be understood? Why, there is not a single sentence in this play that I do not know the meaning of." '[1] Addison also inserted and praised in the *Spectator* Philips's translations from Sappho (Nos. 223, 229).

His odes to babes and children earned for him the *sobriquet* of 'Namby Pamby,' 'a term which has been incorporated into the English language to designate mawkish sentiment. Namby was the infantine pronunciation of Ambrose, and Pamby was formed by the first letter of Philips's surname and that reduplication of sound which is natural to lisping children.'[2]

Between simplicity and absurdity the line is a narrow one, and Philips stepped over it when he wrote to a child in the nursery—

> 'Dimply damsel, sweetly smiling,
> All caressing, none beguiling;

[1] The *Spectator*, No. 335.

[2] Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, vol. vii., p. 62.

Bud of beauty, fairly blowing,
Every charm to nature owing.'

The longest of his baby songs is addressed to the Hon. Miss Carteret, in which he pictures the child's progress to womanhood, and anticipates her future loveliness and maiden reign:

'Then the taper-moulded waist
With a span of ribbon braced;
And the swell of either breast,
And the wide high-vaulted chest;
And the neck so white and round,
Little neck with brilliants bound;
And the store of charms which shine
Above, in lineaments divine,
Crowded in a narrow space
To complete the desperate face;
These alluring powers, and more,
Shall enamoured youths adore;
These and more in courtly lays
Many an aching heart shall praise.'

The inventory of the maiden's physical charms which follows includes veiny temples, sloping shoulders, a hazely lucid eye, and cheek of health; but in the category the only allusion to the attractions of intellect and heart is in a couplet foretelling her

'Gentleness of mind,
Gentle from a gentle kind.'

That Philips translated *The Persian Tales* is indelibly recorded by Pope:

'The bard whom pilfered Pastorals renown,
Who turns a Persian tale for half-a-crown,
Just writes to make his barrenness appear,
And strains from hard bound brains eight lines a year.'

But even Pope could award praise to Philips. In a letter

to Henry Cromwell, in 1710, he observes that he was capable of writing very nobly, 'as I guess by a small copy of his, published in the *Tatler*, on the Danish winter;' and two years later he says to his friend Caryll: 'Mr. Philips has two lines which seem to me what the French call very *picturesque*, that I cannot omit to you:

> 'All hid in snow in bright confusion lie,
> And with one dazzling waste fatigue the eye!'

The lines, not quite accurately quoted by Pope, are from an epistle, addressed to Lord Dorset from Copenhagen, which contains a few striking couplets, two of which may be transcribed before bidding adieu to Ambrose Philips:

> 'The vast leviathan wants room to play,
> And spout his waters in the face of day.
> The starving wolves along the main sea prowl,
> And to the moon in icy valleys howl.'

John Philips (1676-1708).

Ambrose Philips must not be confounded with his namesake John, the author of a clever burlesque of Milton, called *The Splendid Shilling* (1705); of *Blenheim* (1705), a poem which he was urged to write by the Tories in opposition to Addison's *Campaign;* and of a poem upon *Cider* (1706), in 'Miltonian verse,' which seems to have afforded several suggestions to Pope in his *Windsor Forest*. It is said to display a considerable knowledge of the subject, and in that its principal merit consists. From *The Splendid Shilling* a brief extract may be given:

> 'So pass my days. But when nocturnal shades
> This world envelop, and th' inclement air
> Persuades men to repel benumbing frosts
> With pleasant wines, and crackling blaze of wood;
> Me, lonely sitting, nor the glimmering light

Of make-weight candle, nor the joyous talk
Of loving friend delights; distressed, forlorn,
Amidst the horrors of the tedious night,
Darkling I sigh, and feed with dismal thoughts
My anxious mind; or sometimes mournful verse
Indite, and sing of groves and myrtle shades,
Or desperate lady near a purling stream,
Or lover pendent on a willow tree.
Meanwhile I labour with eternal drought
And restless wish, and rave; my parched throat
Finds no relief, nor heavy eyes repose.
But if a slumber haply does invade
My weary limbs, my fancy still awake,
Thoughtful of drink, and eager, in a dream
Tipples imaginary pots of ale
In vain; awake I find the settled thirst
Still gnawing, and the pleasant phantom curse.'

'Philips,' says the poet Campbell, 'had the merit of studying and admiring Milton, but he never could imitate him without ludicrous effect, either in jest or earnest. His *Splendid Shilling* is the earliest and one of the best of our parodies; but *Blenheim* is as completely a burlesque upon Milton as *The Splendid Shilling*, though it was written and read with gravity, ... yet such are the fluctuations of taste that contemporary criticism bowed with solemn admiration over his Miltonic cadences.'

Nicholas Rowe (1673-1718).

Nicholas Rowe had the honour, if it was one in those days, of being made Laureate on the accession of George I. His odes, epistles, and songs are without merit, but he gained reputation as the translator of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, of which Sir Arthur Gorges had produced a version in 1614, and his plays entitle him to a place, though not a high one, in our dramatic literature.

Rowe edited an edition of Shakespeare, and should have known his author, yet in a prologue he declares that

he could not draw women—an amazing assertion echoed by Collins, who praises Fletcher for his knowledge of the 'female mind,' and adds that 'stronger Shakespeare felt for man alone.'

The chronological list of Rowe's dramas runs as follows: *The Ambitious Step-mother* (1700); *Tamerlane* (1702); *The Fair Penitent* (1703); *Ulysses* (1705); *The Royal Convert* (1707); the *Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714); and the *Tragedy of Lady Jane Grey* (1715). Measured by his contemporary dramatists he is a distinguished playwright. His characters do not live, but he could invent effective scenes, though in some cases the poet's taste may be questioned.

For many years *Tamerlane* was acted at Drury Lane on the anniversary of King William's landing in England, and under the names of Tamerlane and Bajazet the king is belauded at the expense of Louis XIV. *The Fair Penitent*, a piece even more successful upon the stage, will still please the reader, though he may question the high eulogium of Johnson, that "scarcely any work of any poet is at once so interesting by the fable, and so delightful by the language." Rowe has not the tragic power which can express passion without rant, and pathos without extravagance. In *The Fair Penitent* Calista gives utterance to her feelings by piling up expletives. Thus, when her husband attacks the lover who has ruined her, she exclaims, 'Destruction! fury! sorrow! shame! and death!' and, on another occasion, she cries out, 'Madness! confusion!' words which give a sense of the ludicrous rather than of the tragic; and so also does Calista's last utterance when, addressing Altamont, she says:

> 'Had I but early known
> Thy wondrous worth, thou excellent young man
> We had been happier both—now 'tis too late!'

Rowe may be regarded as the principal representative of tragedy in the 'age of Pope,' but his respectable work shows a fatal degeneration from the 'gorgeous tragedy' of the Elizabethans.

Aaron Hill (1684-1749).

Aaron Hill, unlike Rowe, was not distinguished as a dramatist, and succeeded only in two or three adaptations from the French. His claims as a poet are also insignificant. He was born in London in 1684, with expectations that were not destined to be realized, but Fortune was not unkind to him. His uncle, Lord Paget, Ambassador at Constantinople, gave the youth a warm welcome, supplied him with a tutor, and sent him to travel in the East. On Lord Paget's return to England, Hill accompanied him, and together they are said to have visited a great part of Europe. Some time later Hill went abroad again, and was absent two or three years. For awhile—it could not have been long—he was secretary to the Earl of Peterborough, and at the age of twenty-six, his good star being still in the ascendant, he married a young lady 'of great merit and beauty, with whom he had a very handsome fortune.' Hill was then appointed manager of Drury Lane, and he wrote a number of plays, the very names of which are now forgotten. Few men indeed so well known in his own day have sunk into such insignificance in ours. He wrote eight books of a long and unfinished epic called *Gideon*, which I suppose no one in the present century has had the hardihood to read; like Young he wrote a poem on *The Judgment Day*, a theme attempted also, shortly before his death, by John Philips, and that, after his kind, he produced a Pindaric ode goes without saying. A long poem called *The Northern Star*, a panegyric on Peter the Great, is said to have passed through several editions. The poem does not prove Hill to be a poet, but it shows his command of the heroic couplet. The style of the poem,

which is an indiscriminate panegyric, may be judged from the following lines:

> 'Transcendent prince! how happy must thou be!
> What can'st thou look upon unblessed by thee?
> What inward peace must that calm bosom know,
> Whence conscious virtue does so strongly flow!
>
> Such are the kings who make God's image shine,
> Nor blush to dare assert their right divine!
> No earth-born bias warps their climbing will,
> No pride their power, no avarice whets their skill.
> They poise each hope which bids the wise obey,
> And shed broad blessings from their widening sway;
> To raise the afflicted, stretch the healing hand,
> Drive crushed oppression from each rescued land,
> Bold in alternate right, or sheath or draw
> The sword of conquest, or the sword of law;
> Spare what resists not, what opposes bend,
> And govern cool, what they with warmth defend.

Hill has the merit of having turned the tables upon Pope, who had put him into the treatise on the *Bathos*, and then into the *Dunciad*, where, however, the lines have more of compliment than censure, since he is made to mount 'far off among the swans of Thames.' Irritated by a note in the *Dunciad*, Hill replied in a long poem entitled *The Progress of Wit, a Circuit*, which opens with the following pointed lines:

> 'Tuneful Alexis, on the Thames' fair side,
> The ladies' plaything, and the Muses' pride;
> With merit popular, with wit polite,
> Easy though vain, and elegant though light;
> Desiring, and deserving others' praise,
> Poorly accepts a fame he ne'er repays;
> Unborn to cherish, sneakingly approves,
> And wants the soul to spread the worth he loves.'

In a letter to Hill Pope complained of these lines, and

had the hypocrisy to say that he never thought any great matters of his poetical capacity, but prided himself on the superiority of his moral life. Hill returned a masterly and incisive reproof to this ridiculous statement, in the course of which he says:

'I am sorry to hear you say you never thought any great matters of your poetry. It is in my opinion the characteristic you are to hope your distinction from. To be honest is the duty of every plain man. Nor, since the soul of poetry is sentiment, can a great poet want morality. But your honesty you possess in common with a million who will never be remembered; whereas your poetry is a peculiar, that will make it impossible that you should be forgotten.'

He adds that if Pope had not been in the spleen when he wrote, he would have remembered that humility is a moral virtue; and how, asks the writer, can you know that your moral life is above that of most of the wits 'since you tell me in the same letter that many of their names were unknown to you?'

Aaron Hill, though he could write a sensible letter, was not a wise man. He was 'everything by turns and nothing long.' Poetry was but one of his accomplishments, and we are told that he cultivated it 'as a relaxation from the study of history, criticism, geography, physic, commerce, agriculture, war, law, chemistry, and natural philosophy, to which he devoted the greatest part of his time.'

As a poet Hill has the facility in composition exhibited by so many of his contemporaries, and he has occasionally a pretty turn of fancy. His last labour was the successful adaptation of Voltaire's *Mérope* to the English stage (1749); sixteen years before he had adapted *Zara* with equal success.

Among the minor poets of the period an honourable place must be given to Parnell, who possessed the soul of a poet, but gave limited expression to it, for it was only during the later years of a short life that he discovered where his genius lay. The friend of Pope, Arbuthnot, and Swift, his biography has been written by Johnson, and more discursively by his countryman Goldsmith.

Thomas Parnell (1679-1718).

Thomas Parnell was born in Dublin, 1679, entered Trinity College at the early age of thirteen, and in 1700 obtained the degree of Master of Arts. Having taken orders he gained preferment in the Church, became, in 1706, Archdeacon of Clogher, and through the recommendation of Swift obtained also a good living. Parnell was fond of society, and was accustomed as often as possible to join the wits in London. He was a member of the Scriblerus Club, wrote for the *Spectator*, preached eloquent sermons, and had the ambition of a poet. But the loss of his wife preyed upon his mind, and he is said, though I believe chiefly on Pope's authority, to have given way to intemperance. He died suddenly at Chester at the age of thirty-nine in 1718.

Parnell was one of the poets whose fortunes Swift did his best to promote. Writing in 1712, he says, 'I gave Lord Bolingbroke a poem of Parnell's. I made Parnell insert some compliments in it to his lordship. He is extremely pleased with it, and read some parts of it to-day to Lord Treasurer, who liked it as much. And indeed he outdoes all our poets here a bar's length.' And a month later he writes, 'Lord Bolingbroke likes Parnell mightily, and it is pleasant to see that one who hardly passed for anything in Ireland, makes his way here with a little friendly forwarding.'

The Hermit, the *Hymn to Contentment*, an *Allegory on Man*, and a *Night Piece on Death*, give Parnell his title

to a place among the poets. *The Rise of Woman*, and *Health, an Eclogue*, have also much merit, and were praised by Pope (but this was to their author) as 'two of the most beautiful things he ever read.' The story of *The Hermit*, written originally in Spanish, is given in *Howell's Letters* (1645-1655), and is admirably told by Parnell, but much that he wrote, including a series of long poems on Scripture characters, is poetically worthless. His poems, published five years after his death, were edited by Pope, who wisely suppressed some pieces unworthy of the poet. Then, as now, literary scavengers were at work. In 1758 the suppressed poems were published, and called forth the comment from Gray, 'Parnell is the dunghill of Irish Grub Street.' To Parnell Pope was indebted for the *Essay on Homer* prefixed to the translation, with which he does not seem to have been well pleased. He complained of the stiffness of the style, and said it had cost him more pains in the correcting than the writing of it would have done.

If Parnell's prose has the defect of stiffness, his lines glide with a smoothness that must have satisfied the ear of Pope. The higher harmonies of verse were unknown to him, but ease is not without a charm, and in illustration of Parnell's gift the final lines of *A Night Piece on Death* shall be quoted:

> 'When men my scythe and darts supply,
> How great a king of fears am I!
> They view me like the last of things,
> They make and then they draw my stings.
> Fools! if you less provoked your fears,
> No more my spectre form appears.
> Death's but a path that must be trod,
> If man would ever pass to God;
> A port of calms, a state to ease
> From the rough rage of swelling seas.

Why then thy flowing sable stoles,
Deep pendent cypress, mourning poles,
Loose scarfs to fall athwart thy weeds,
Long palls, drawn hearses, covered steeds,
And plumes of black that as they tread,
Nod o'er the scutcheons of the dead?
Nor can the parted body know,
Nor wants the soul these forms of woe;
As men who long in prison dwell,
With lamps that glimmer round the cell,
Whene'er their suffering years are run,
Spring forth to greet the glittering sun;
Such joy, though far transcending sense,
Have pious souls at parting hence.
On earth and in the body placed,
A few and evil years they waste;
But when their chains are cast aside,
See the glad scene unfolding wide,
Clap the glad wing, and tower away,
And mingle with the blaze of day.'

Thomas Tickell (1686-1740).

Tickell wished to be remembered as the friend of Addison, and with Addison his name is indissolubly associated. The poem dedicated to the essayist's memory is perhaps overpraised by Macaulay when he says that it would do honour to the greatest name in our literature, but it proved incontestibly that Tickell, as a poet, was superior to the master whom he so loved and honoured. His reputation hangs upon this elegy, which Fox pronounced perfect.[1] The *Prospect of Peace*, which passed through several editions, had at one time a considerable reputation, not assuredly for its

[1] Edward Young tried his skill on the same theme in a poetical epistle to Tickell, but his lines are leaden and his praise absurd. Addison's glory was so great, he says, as a statesman and a patriot, that

'It borders on disgrace
To say he sung the best of human race.'

poetry, but because it appealed to the spirit of the time. The style of the poem may be judged from these lines :—

'Accept, great Anne, the tears their memory draws,
Who nobly perished in their sovereign's cause ;
For thou in pity bidd'st the war give o'er,
Mourn'st thy slain heroes, nor wilt venture more.
Vast price of blood on each victorious day !
(But Europe's freedom doth that price repay.)
Lamented triumphs ! when one breath must tell
That Marlborough conquered and that Dormer fell.'

His *Colin and Lucy* called forth high praise from Goldsmith as one of the best ballads in our language, and Gray terms it the prettiest ballad in the world. Three stanzas from this once famous poem shall be quoted :—

'"I hear a voice you cannot hear,
Which says I must not stay ;
I see a hand you cannot see,
Which beckons me away.
By a false heart and broken vows,
In early youth I die ;
Was I to blame because his bride
Was thrice as rich as I ?

'"Ah, Colin, give not her thy vows,
Vows due to me alone ;
Nor thou, fond maid, receive his kiss,
Nor think him all thy own.
To-morrow in the church to wed,
Impatient, both prepare !
But know, fond maid, and know, false man,
That Lucy will be there !

'"Then bear my corse, my comrades, bear,
This bridegroom blithe to meet,
He in his wedding trim so gay,
I in my winding-sheet."
She spoke, she died ; her corse was borne,
The bridegroom blithe to meet,
He in his wedding trim so gay,
She in her winding-sheet.'

There is some fancy but no imagination in the machinery of Tickell's long poem on *Kensington Gardens*, a title which recalls Matthew Arnold's exquisite stanzas. But the pathetic beauty of Arnold's lines belongs to a world of poetry wholly unlike that in which even the best of the Queen Anne poets lived and moved.

Tickell's translation of the first book of the *Iliad* led to the quarrel already mentioned in the account of Pope. He wrote, also, a rather lengthy poem on Oxford, in which there is some absurd criticism of insignificant poetasters, and, as a matter of course, an extravagant eulogium of Addison.

The few facts recorded of Tickell's life may be summed up in a paragraph. He was born in 1686 at Bridekirk, in Cumberland, and entered Queen's College, Oxford, in 1701. In 1708 he obtained his M.A. degree, and two years later was chosen Fellow. For sixteen years Tickell held his fellowship, but resigned it on his marriage in 1726. In a poem addressed to the lady before marriage, he asks whether

> 'By thousands sought, Clotilda, canst thou free
> Thy crowd of captives and descend to me?"

Praise which in these days would be regarded as fulsome secured the friendship and patronage of Addison, who employed him in public affairs, and when he became Secretary of State made Tickell Under-Secretary. To him Addison left the charge of editing his works, which were published by subscription, and appeared in four quarto volumes in 1721. In 1725 he was made secretary to the Lord Justices of Ireland, 'a place of great honour,' which he held until his death in 1740. The praise of Wordsworth, a poet always chary of expressing approbation, has been bestowed upon Tickell. 'I think him,' he said, 'one of the very best writers of occasional verses."

Tickell had written some lines on hunting, which he published as a fragment. His contemporary Somerville, selecting the same subject, wrote *The Chase* (1735), a poem in blank verse.

William Somerville (1692-1742).

He was born at Edston, in Warwickshire, and was said, Dr. Johnson writes, 'to be of the first family in his county.' He was educated at Winchester and Oxford, and had the tastes of a scholar as well as of a country gentleman, which, among other accomplishments, included that of hard drinking. We know little about him, and what we do know is deplorable, for his friend Shenstone writes that he was plagued and threatened by low wretches, and 'forced to drink himself into pains of the body in order to get rid of the pains of the mind.' He died in 1742, the owner of a good estate, which, owing to a contempt for economy, he was never able to enjoy. 'I loved him for nothing so much,' said Shenstone, 'as for his flocci-nauci-nihili-pili-fication of money.'

In *The Chase* Somerville had the advantage of knowing his subject, but knowledge is not poetry, and the interest of the poem is not due to its poetical qualities. He deserves some credit for his skill in handling a variety of metres as well as blank verse, in which his principal poem is written. In an address *To Mr. Addison*, the couplet,

> 'When panting Virtue her last efforts made,
> You brought your Clio to the virgin's aid,'

is praised by Johnson as one of those happy strokes which are seldom attained. In the same poem Shakespeare and Addison are brought together in a way that is far from happy:

> 'In heaven he sings; on earth your muse supplies
> Th' important loss, and heals our weeping eyes,
> Correctly great, she melts each flinty heart
> With equal genius, but superior art.'

Praise can be too strong even for a poet's digestion, and Somerville, who writes a great deal more nonsense in the same strain, should have remembered that he was not addressing a fool. If the poetical adulation of the time is to be excused, it must be on the ground that a poet had to live by patronage and not by the public. In a pecuniary point of view his subservience to men in high position was often successful. An almost universal custom, it was not regarded as degrading; but the poet must have been peculiarly constituted who was not degraded by it.

John Dyer (1698(?)-1758).

In the last century any subject was deemed suitable for poetry, and the Welsh poet, John Dyer, who was born about 1698, found in his later life poetical materials in *The Fleece* (1757), a poem in four books of blank verse. His genius for descriptive poetry and his passionate and intelligent delight in natural objects are seen more pleasantly in *Grongar Hill* (published in the same year as Thomson's *Winter*), a poem not without grammatical inaccuracies, one of which deforms the first couplet, but full of poetical feeling. In an ease of composition which runs into laxity he reminds us occasionally of George Wither. His chief merit is, that while independent of Thomson, he was inspired by the same love, and wrote with the same aim. Dyer is not content with bare description, but likes to moralize on the landscape he surveys. Thus, when looking on a ruined tower, the poet exclaims:

> 'Yet time has seen, that lifts the low,
> And level lays the lofty brow,
> Has seen this broken pile compleat,
> Big with the vanity of state;
> But transient is the smile of fate!
> A little rule, a little sway,
> A sunbeam in a winter's day,
> Is all the proud and mighty have
> Between the cradle and the grave.'

Dyer who is best seen in the octosyllabic metre, chose it also for *The Country Walk*, a poem in which, notwithstanding an occasional lapse into the conventional diction of the period, the rural pictures are drawn from life. He takes the reader into the farm-yard and fields as he writes:

'I am resolved this charming day
In the open field to stray,
And have no roof above my head
But that whereon the gods do tread.
Before the yellow barn I see
A beautiful variety
Of strutting cocks, advancing stout,
And flirting empty chaff about;
Hens, ducks, and geese, and all their brood,
And turkeys gobbling for their food;
While rustics thrash the wealthy floor,
And tempt all to crowd the door.
* * * * *
And now into the fields I go,
Where thousand flaming flowers glow,
And every neighbouring hedge I greet
With honey-suckles smelling sweet;
Now o'er the daisy meads I stray
And meet with, as I pace my way,
Sweetly shining on the eye
A rivulet gliding smoothly by,
Which shows with what an easy tide
The moments of the happy glide.'

An Epistle to a Friend in Town, records his satisfaction with the country retirement in which his days are passed. In a rather awkward stanza he says that he is more than content, and is indeed charmed with everything, and the lines close with the moralizing that was dear to Dyer's heart:

'Alas! what a folly that wealth and domain
We heap up in sin and in sorrow!
Immense is the toil, yet the labour how vain!
Is not life to be over to-morrow?

'Then glide on my moments, the few that I have,
Smooth-shaded and quiet and even;
While gently the body descends to the grave,
And the spirit arises to heaven.'

Dyer was an artist as well as a poet, and visited Italy, which suggested a poem in blank verse, *The Ruins of Rome* (1740). After his return to England he entered into holy orders, took a wife, who is said to have been a descendant of Shakespeare, and settled at Calthorp in Leicestershire, which he afterwards exchanged for a living in Lincolnshire. There is much to like in Dyer, and he has had the good fortune to win the applause of two great poets. Gray says, in a letter to Horace Walpole, that he had 'more of poetry in his imagination than almost any of our number,' and Wordsworth in a sonnet, *To the Poet, John Dyer,* writes:

* * * * *

'Though hasty Fame hath many a chaplet culled
For worthless brows, while in the pensive shade
Of cold neglect she leaves thy head ungraced,
Yet pure and powerful minds, hearts meek and still,
A grateful few, shall love thy modest Lay,
Long as the shepherd's bleating flock shall stray
O'er naked Snowdon's wide aerial waste;
Long as the thrush shall pipe on Grongar Hill!'

William Shenstone (1714-1764).

'The true rustic style,' Charles Lamb writes, 'I think is to be found in Shenstone,' and he calls his *Schoolmistress* the 'prettiest of poems.'

William Shenstone was born in 1714 at the Leasowes in Hales-Owen, a spot upon which he afterwards expended his skill as a landscape gardener. In 1732 he went up to Pembroke College, Oxford, and remained there for some years without taking a degree. Those years appear to have been devoted to poetry. In 1737 Shenstone published

a small volume anonymously. This was followed by the *Judgment of Hercules* (1741), and by the *Schoolmistress* (1742). In 1745 he undertook the management of his estate, and began, to quote Dr. Johnson's quaint description, 'to point his prospects, to diversify his surface, to entangle his walks, and to wind his waters; which he did with such judgment and such fancy, as made his little domain the envy of the great and the admiration of the skilful: a place to be visited by travellers and copied by designers.' On this estate, with its lakes and cascades, its urns and poetical inscriptions, its hanging woods, and 'wild shaggy precipice,' Shenstone appears to have spent all his fortune. He led the life of a dilettante, and died unmarried at the age of fifty. His elegies and songs are dead, and whatever vitality remains in his verse will be found in the *Pastoral Ballad* and the *Schoolmistress*.

The ballad written in anapæstic verse has an Arcadian grace, against which even Johnson's robust intellect was not proof. For the following lines he says, 'if any mind denies its sympathy it has no acquaintance with love or nature':

> 'When forced the fair nymph to forego,
> What anguish I felt in my heart!
> Yet I thought—but it might not be so—
> 'Twas with pain that she saw me depart.
> She gazed as I slowly withdrew,
> My path I could hardly discern;
> So sweetly she bade me adieu,
> I thought that she bade me return.'

The *Schoolmistress*, written in imitation of Spenser, has the merits of simplicity and homely humour. The village dame is a life-like character, and the urchins whom she is supposed to teach, and does sometimes teach by chastisement, are cunningly portrayed.

From the verses *Written at an Inn in Henley* three stanzas may be quoted. The last will be already known to readers familiar with their Boswell:

'I fly from pomp, I fly from plate,
I fly from falsehood's specious grin!
Freedom I love, and form I hate,
And choose my lodgings at an inn.

'Here, waiter! take my sordid ore,
Which lacqueys else might hope to win;
It buys what courts have not in store,
It buys me freedom at an inn!

'Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn.'

Unhappily this final verse, which Johnson is said to have repeated 'with great emotion,' has lost its application. The modern traveller, instead of being warmly welcomed at an inn, loses his identity and becomes a number.

Mark Akenside (1721-1770).

Akenside, who was born at Newcastle, 1721, received his education in Edinburgh, where he was sent to prepare for the ministry among the Dissenters. He, however, changed his mind, became a medical student, and finally, though much disliked for his manners, gained reputation as a physician in London. He is stated to have been excessively stiff and formal, and a frigid stiffness marks the *Pleasures of Imagination* (1744), a remarkable work considering the writer's age, since it is without the faults of youth. The poem is founded on Addison's *Essays* on the subject in the *Spectator*, and the poet also owes a considerable debt to Shaftesbury. Akenside's blank verse has the merits of dignity and strength. But the work is as cold as the author's manners were said to be, and in spite of what may

be called poetical power, as distinct from a high order of inspiration, the poem leaves the reader unmoved. Pope, who saw it in MS., said that Akenside was 'no everyday writer,' which is a just criticism. The *Pleasures of Imagination* has the merits of careful workmanship and of some originality, but the interest which it at one time excited is not likely to be revived. In 1757 Akenside re-wrote the poem, and I believe that no critic, with the exception of Hazlitt, regards the second attempt as an improvement on the first. His skill in the use of classical imagery is seen to advantage in the *Hymn to the Naiads* (1746), and he deserves praise, too, for his inscriptions, which are distinguished for conciseness and vigour of style. The poet, it may be added, wrote a great number of odes that lack all, or nearly all, the qualities which should distinguish lyrical poetry. Not a spark of the divine fire warms or illuminates these reputable verses, but the author states that his chief aim was to be correct, and in that he has succeeded.

David Mallet (1700-1765).

David Mallet, a friend or acquaintance of Thomson, was contemptible as a man and comparatively insignificant as a poet. He did a large amount of dirty work, and appears to have made a good income by it. The base character of the man was known to Bolingbroke, of whose basest purpose he made him the instrument (see c. vii.). Mallet's ballad of *William and Margaret* (1724) is known to many readers, and so is the inferior ballad *Edwin and Emma*, which was written many years afterwards. In 1728 he published *The Excursion*, a poem not sufficiently significant to prevent Wordsworth from selecting the same title. In Mallet's poem on *Verbal Criticism* (1733), Johnson states that he paid court to Pope, and was rewarded by a travelling tutorship gained through the poet's influence. In 1731 his

tragedy, *Eurydice*, was acted at Drury Lane. He joined Thomson, as we have said elsewhere, in the composition of the masque of *Alfred*, and 'almost wholly changed' the piece after Thomson's death. *Amyntor and Theodora*, a long poem in blank verse, appeared in 1747; *Britannia*, a masque, in 1753, and *Elvira*, a tragedy, in 1763. Mallet, who was without qualifications for the task, wrote a life of Lord Bacon. He is said to have obtained a pension for inflaming the mind of the public against Admiral Byng, and thereby hastening his execution.

In Anderson's edition of the poets, Mallet's biography is related with more fulness than by Dr. Johnson, and, after frankly recording acts which fully justify Macaulay's statement that Mallet's character was infamous, the writer adds, 'his integrity in business and in life is unimpeached.'

Scottish Song-Writers.

When the poets of England were writing satires, moral essays, and elaborate didactic treatises, the poets of Scotland were singing, in bird-like notes, songs of humour and of love. It is remarkable that the Scotch, the shrewdest, hardest, and most business-like people in these islands, should be so richly endowed with a gift shared and enjoyed by rich and poor alike. The most exquisite of English lyrics fall, where culture is wanting, on regardless ears; the songs of Ramsay and of Burns, of Lady Anne Lindsay and Jane Elliot, of Hogg and Lady Nairne, of Tannahill and Macneil, are household words in Scotland to gentle and simple. A few of the choicest songs of Scotland are due to ladies of rank, but the larger number have sprung from 'the huts where poor men lie.' Ramsay was a barber and wig-maker; Burns, as all the world knows,

followed the plough; Tannahill was a weaver; Hogg a shepherd; and Robert Nicoll the son of a small farmer, 'ruined out of house and hold.'

Allan Ramsay (1686-1758).

Allan Ramsay was born at Leadhills, in Lanarkshire, in 1686, and was therefore Pope's senior by two years. He has been called 'the restorer of Scottish poetry,' and by his compilation of *The Evergreen* (1724), and of *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, published in the same year, he gathered up the wealth of song scattered through the country. *The Miscellany* extended to four volumes, and before the poet's death had reached twelve editions. An undying interest belongs to both anthologies. *The Evergreen* was the first poetry Walter Scott perused, and in a marginal note on his copy of *The Tea-Table Miscellany* he writes: 'This book belonged to my grandfather, Robert Scott, and out of it I was taught *Hardiknute* by heart before I could read the ballad myself. It was the first poem I ever learnt, the last I shall ever forget.' The ballad Scott loved so well, I may say in passing, was written as a whole or in part by Lady Wardlaw (1677-1727),[1] and belongs therefore either to our period or to the later years of the seventeenth century.

In 1725 Ramsay published *The Gentle Shepherd*, a pastoral that puts to shame the numerous semi-classical and mythological poems which appeared under that name in England. It is essentially a rural poem, in which the action and language harmonize with what we know, or

[1] To Lady Wardlaw Dr. Robert Chambers attributed twenty-five ballads, and among them several of the finest we possess, which are regarded as ancient by every other authority. If the assumption were proved, this lady would hold a distinguished and unique position among the poets of the Pope period, but there is absolutely no ground for the theory so zealously advocated by Chambers.

think we know, of country manners and life. There is neither striking invention in the plot nor much individuality in the characters, but there is poetical harmony throughout, many pretty rustic scenes, and sufficient interest to carry the reader pleasantly over the ground. *The Gentle Shepherd* is the work of a poet, and gives a higher impression of Ramsay's power than his songs alone would warrant. His lyrical pieces, though not wholly without the lilt and charm such verse exacts, are perhaps mainly of service in showing the immeasurable superiority of Burns. Ramsay was a successful poet, and not too much of a poet to be also a successful man of business. He exchanged wig-making for bookselling, kept a shop in the High Street of Edinburgh, and finally retired to a villa which he had built for himself on the Castle Hill. A good-humoured, care-defying man, he enjoyed life in an easy way, and was not disposed to repine when his road lay down the hill. In an epistle to a friend he writes:

> 'And now in years and sense grown auld,
> In ease I like my limbs to fauld,
> Debts I abhor, and plan to be
> From shackling trade and dangers free;
> That I may, loosed frae care and strife,
> With calmness view the edge of life;
> And when a full ripe age shall crave,
> Slide easily into my grave.'

Among the Scottish song-writers of the period may be mentioned Robert Crawford (1695?-1732), whose love verses, written in a conventional strain, are not without music; Lord Binning (1696-1732), the author of a pretty song called *Ungrateful Nanny;* and William Hamilton of Bangour (1704-1754), who wrote the well-known *Braes of Yarrow.* The most charming of Scottish lyrics belong,

however, to a later period of the century than the age of Pope.

The student who reads the minor poets who figured, in some cases with much applause, during the years of Pope's ascendency, will be struck by the almost total absence from their works of creative power. These rhymers wrote for the age, and illustrate it, but they did not write for all time, and a small volume would suffice to hold all their verse which is of permanent value. Too often they imagined that by the composition of flowing couplets they proved their title to rank with inspired poets. They confounded the art of verse-making with the divine art of poetry, and were not aware that the substance of their work is prose. Now and then the digger in this mine will discover a small nugget of gold, but for the most part the interest called forth by the poets mentioned in the present chapter, is more historical than poetical, and the reader in passing to the great prose writers of the age will be conscious of gain rather than of loss.

PART II.

THE PROSE WRITERS.

CHAPTER IV.

JOSEPH ADDISON—SIR RICHARD STEELE.

As essayists, the writings of Addison and of Steele are familiar to all readers of eighteenth-century literature. Their work in other departments may be neglected without much loss; but the student who disregards the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, and some of the essay-volumes which follow in their wake, will be blind to one of the most significant literary features of the period.

The alliance between Addison and Steele was so intimate, that to judge of one apart from the other, would be fair to neither. It may be well, therefore, after giving the leading facts in the lives of the two friends, to bring them together again while considering the work they accomplished in their literary partnership. One point, I think, will come out clearly in this examination, namely, that while Steele might, under very inferior conditions, have produced the *Tatler* and *Spectator* without Addison, it is highly improbable that Addison, as an essayist, would have existed without Steele.

Joseph Addison (1672-1719).

Addison lives on the reputation of his prose works, but he thought that he was a poet, and was regarded as a poet by his contemporaries. It was by verse that he won his earliest reputation, and it was on his Pegasus that he rose to be Secretary of State. He was born on May 1st,

1672, at Milston, in Wiltshire, a parish of which his father was the rector, and was educated at the Charterhouse, where he contracted his memorable friendship with Steele. Thence, in 1687, at the boyish age of fifteen, he went up to Queen's College, Oxford, and in a few months, thanks to his Latin verses, gained a scholarship at Magdalen, of which college ten years later he became a fellow.

While at Oxford he acquired, after the fashion of the day, what Johnson calls 'the trade of a courtier.' His Latin poem on the *Peace of Ryswick* was dedicated to Montague, and two years later a pension of £300 a year, gained through Somers and Montague, enabled him to travel, in order that by gaining a knowledge of French and Italian, he might be fitted for the diplomatic service. Some time after his return to England he published his *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* (1705), and dedicated the volume to Swift, 'the most agreeable companion, the truest friend, and the greatest genius of his age.'

Addison's patrons had now lost their power, and he was left to his own exertions. His difficulties did not last long. In 1704 the battle of Blenheim called forth several weak efforts from the poetasters, and as the Government required verse more worthy of the occasion, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the recommendation of Montague, now Earl of Halifax, applied to Addison, who, in answer to the appeal, published *The Campaign*, in 1705. The poem contains the well-known similitude of the angel, and also an apt allusion to the great storm that had lately destroyed fleets and devastated the country.

> 'So when an angel by divine command
> With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,
> Such as of late o'er pale Britannia past,
> Calm and serene he drives the furious blast;

> And, pleased the Almighty's orders to perform,
> Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.'

The Campaign, which has no other passage worth quoting, proved a happy hit, and was of such service to the Ministry, that Addison found the way to fame and fortune. He was appointed Commissioner of Appeals, and not long after Under Secretary of State. In 1707 he accompanied his friend and patron, Halifax, on a mission to Hanover, and two years later he was appointed Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. In Dublin he gained golden opinions. 'I am convinced,' Swift writes, 'that whatever Government come over, you will find all marks of kindness from any parliament here with respect to your employment; the Tories contending with the Whigs which should speak best of you. In short, if you will come over again when you are at leisure, we will raise an army and make you king of Ireland.' When the Whig Ministry fell in 1710, and Addison lost his appointment, he must have gained a fortune, for he was able to purchase an estate for £10,000.

In the early years of the century the Italian opera, which had been brought into England in the reign of William and Mary, excited the mirth and opposition of the wits. Lord Chesterfield, who called it 'too absurd and extravagant to mention,' said, 'Whenever I go to the opera I leave my sense and reason at the door with my half-guinea, and deliver myself up to my eyes and ears.' Steele, Gay, and Pope ridiculed the new-fangled entertainment, and Colley Cibber, too, pointed his jest at these 'poetical drams, these gin-shops of the stage that intoxicate its auditors, and dishonour their understanding with a levity for which I want a name.' Addison, who has some lively papers on the subject in the *Spectator*, undertook to give a faithful account of the progress of the

Italian opera on the English stage, 'for there is no question,' he writes, 'but our great grandchildren will be very curious to know why their forefathers used to sit together like an audience of foreigners in their own country; and to hear whole plays acted before them in a tongue which they did not understand.'

Before writing thus in the *Spectator*, Addison, in order to oppose the Italian opera, by what he regarded as a more rational pastime, produced his English opera of *Rosamond*, which was acted in 1706, and proved a failure on the stage. The music is said to have been bad, and the poetry is the work of a writer destitute of lyrical genius. Lord Macaulay, who finds a merit in almost everything produced by Addison, praises 'the smoothness with which the verses glide, and the elasticity with which they bound,' and considers that if he 'had left heroic couplets to Pope, and blank verse to Rowe, and had employed himself in writing airy and spirited songs, his reputation as a poet would have stood far higher than it now does.' The gliding movement of the verse may be admitted; but lyric poetry demands the higher qualities of music and imaginative treatment, and Addison's 'smoothness,' so far from being a poetical gift, is a mechanical acquisition.

In 1713 his *Cato*, with its stately rhetoric and cold dignity, received a very different reception. The prologue, written by Pope, is in admirable accordance with the spirit of the play. Addison's purpose is to exhibit a great man struggling with adversity, and Pope writes:

> 'He bids your breasts with ancient ardour rise,
> And calls forth Roman drops from British eyes;
> Virtue confessed in human shape he draws,
> What Plato thought, and God-like Cato was:
> No common object to your sight displays,
> But what with pleasure Heaven itself surveys;

A brave man struggling in the storms of fate,
And greatly falling with a falling state!
While Cato gives his little senate laws,
What bosom beats not in his country's cause?'

Addison has proved that he could draw a life-like character in his representation of Sir Roger de Coverley, but the *dramatis personæ*, who act a part, or are supposed to act one, in *Cato*, are mere dummies, made to express fine sentiments. There is no flesh and blood in them, and owing to the dramatist's regard for unity of place, the play is full of absurdities. Yet *Cato* was received with immense applause. It was regarded from a political aspect, and both Whig and Tory strove to turn the drama to party account. 'The numerous and violent claps of the Whig party,' Pope writes, 'on the one side of the theatre, were echoed back by the Tories on the other; while the author sweated behind the scenes with concern to find their applause proceeding more from the hand than the head.'

In another letter he says: 'The town is so fond of it, that the orange wenches and fruit women in the parks offer the books at the side of the coaches, and the prologue and epilogue are cried about the streets by the common hawkers.' It would be interesting to ascertain what there was in the state of public affairs in the spring of 1713, which created this enthusiasm. Swift, writing to Stella, alludes to a rehearsal of the play, but makes no criticism upon it; and Berkeley, who was in London at the time, and had a seat in Addison's box on the first night, is also silent about it. In a letter written, as it happens, by Bolingbroke, on the day that *Cato* was produced, he indicates the signs of the time, as they appeared to a Tory statesman: 'The prospect before us,' he writes, 'is dark and melancholy. What will happen no man is able to foretell.'

It was this sense of doubt and insecurity in the nation that gave significance to trifles. The political atmosphere was charged with electricity. The Tories, though in office, were far from feeling themselves secure, and both Harley and Bolingbroke were in correspondence with the Pretender. Atterbury, who was heart and soul with him, had just been made a bishop, Protestant ascendancy was in danger, the security of the country seemed to hang on the frail life of the Queen, and the strong party spirit of the time was easily fanned into a flame. We cannot now place ourselves in the position of the spectators whose passions gave such popularity to *Cato*. Its mild platitudes and rhetorical periods, its coldness and sobriety, seem ill fitted to arouse the fervour of playgoers, but Addison, whose good luck rarely failed him, was especially fortunate in the moment chosen for the representation of the play. Had *Cato* exhibited genius of the highest order, it could not have been more successful. Cibber writes that it was acted in London five times a week for a month to constantly crowded houses, and when the tragedy was acted at Oxford, 'Our house,' he says, 'was in a manner invested, and entrance demanded by twelve o'clock at noon, and before one it was not wide enough for many who came too late for places.'[1]

Cato had the good fortune to run in London for thirty-five nights, and gained also some reputation on the continent. It is formed on the French model, and Addison was therefore praised by Voltaire as 'the first English writer who composed a regular tragedy.' He added that *Cato* was 'a masterpiece.' If so, it is one of the masterpieces that has long ceased to be read. Little could its author have surmised that his tragedy, received with universal praise,

[1] Cibber's *Apology*, p. 386.

had but a brief life to live, while the Essays which he had already contributed to the *Tatler* and *Spectator* would make his name familiar to future generations.

Addison's poetry may now be regarded as extinct, and most of the poems he wrote are probably unknown to the present generation of readers even by name. His Latin verses are pronounced excellent by all competent critics, but when a man writes verses in a dead language he does so generally to show his scholarship, and not to express his inspiration. Latin verse is, as M. Taine says, a faded flower. Now and then, indeed, a poem has been written with merits apart from its latinity—witness the *Epitaphium Damonis* of Milton—but Addison, who lacked poetic fire in his native language, was not likely to find it in a dead tongue. His English poems are generally dull, and sometimes, as in his earliest poem, the *Account of the greatest English Poets* (1694), the tameness of the verse is matched by the ignorance of the criticism. The student will observe how differently the theme is treated by a true poet like Drayton in his *Epistle to Reynolds;* or, like Ben Jonson, in the many allusions that he makes to his country's poets. Compare, too, Addison's *Letter from Italy* (1701) with the lovely lines on a like theme in Goldsmith's *Traveller*, and the contrast between a versemaan and a poet is at once apparent. Addison, it may be added, is remembered for his hymns, which may be found in most selections of sacred verse, and deserve a place in the best of them. As the forerunner of Isaac Watts (1674-1748) and of Charles Wesley (1708-1788), he struck upon what at that time might, in our country, be almost called a new department of literature; and it is remarkable that an age which so dreaded enthusiasm should have originated verse which gives utterance to the most emotional form of spiritual aspiration. As hymn-writers, Englishmen were more than

a century behind the best sacred poets of Germany. Luther had taught the German people the power of hymnody, but it was during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), and after its conclusion, that the spirit of devotion found full expression in religious verse. Just before the engagement at Leipzic, Gustavus Adolphus wrote his well-known battle hymn, and the peace was celebrated in a noble hymn by Martin Rinkart. He was followed by a succession of sacred singers whose devout utterances influenced and in some degree inspired the Wesleys.

"A verse may find him whom a sermon flies,"

says George Herbert, and the enormous power wielded by Methodism owes a large portion of its strength to song.

Amidst much in their writings that is questionable in taste and weak in expression, both Watts and Charles Wesley have written hymns which prove their incontestible right to a place among the poets, and the influence they have exerted over the English-speaking race is beyond the power of the literary historian to estimate. The external divisions of the Christian Church are numerous; its unity is to be seen in the Hymn Book. 'Men whose theological views contrast most strongly,' says Mr. Abbey in his essay on *The English Sacred Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, 'meet on common ground when they express in verse the deeper aspirations of the heart and the voice of Christian praise."

In 1714, on the death of the Queen, Addison was once more in office, and held his old position of Irish Secretary. In the following year he defended the Whig Government and Whig principles in the *Freeholder*, a paper published twice weekly. In it he gives no niggard praise to the Government of George I., and to the King himself, for his

'civil virtues,' and for his martial achievements. Addison's praise disagrees, it need scarcely be said, with the more minute and veracious description of the King given by Thackeray, but a party politician in those days could scarcely be a faithful chronicler. He could see what he wished to see, but found it necessary to shut his eyes when the prospect became unpleasant. George was a heartless libertine, but Addison observes with great satisfaction that the women most eminent for virtue and good sense are in his interest. 'It would be no small misfortune,' he says, 'to a sovereign, though he had all the male part of the nation on his side, if he did not find himself king of the most beautiful half of his subjects. Ladies are always of great use to the party they espouse, and never fail to win over numbers to it. Lovers, according to Sir William Petty's computation, make at least the third part of the sensible men of the British nation, and it has been an uncontroverted maxim in all ages, that though a husband is sometimes a stubborn sort of a creature, a lover is always at the devotion of his mistress. By this means it lies in the power of every fine woman to secure at least half-a-dozen able-bodied men to his Majesty's service. The female world are likewise indispensably necessary in the best causes to manage the controversial part of them, in which no man of tolerable breeding is ever able to refute them. Arguments out of a pretty mouth are unanswerable.'

The essayist thinks it fortunate for the Whigs 'that their very enemies acknowledge the finest women of Great Britain to be of that party;' and in an amusing but rather absurd way he discourses to maids, wives, and widows on the advantages of adhering to the Hanoverian Government. It is characteristic of Addison that a political paper like the *Freeholder* should be flavoured with the humour and

badinage he found so effective in the *Spectator*. To the ladies he appeals again and again, but not to their reason. He gives them mirth instead of argument, and thinks it more likely to prevail with the "Fair Sex.' The *Freeholder* has several papers worthy of the author in his best moods, the best of them, perhaps, being the 'Tory Fox-hunter,' with which, to quote Johnson's words, 'bigotry itself must be delighted.' In the year which gave birth to the *Freeholder*, *The Drummer*, a comedy, was acted at Drury Lane, and ran three nights. The play was not acknowledged by Addison, neither was it printed in Tickell's edition of his works; but Steele, who published an edition of the play, with a dedication to Congreve, never doubted, and there is no reason to doubt, that Addison was the author. 'The piece,' Mr. Courthope writes, 'is like *Cato*, a standing proof of Addison's deficiency in dramatic genius. The plot is poor and trivial, nor does the dialogue, though it shows in many passages traces of its author's peculiar vein of humour, make amends by its brilliancy for the tameness of the dramatic situation.'[1]

After the *Freeholder* Addison wrote nothing of importance, unless we except the essay published after his death *On the Evidences of Christianity*. Of this essay it will suffice to quote the judgment of his most distinguished eulogist. After observing that the treatise shows the narrow limits of Addison's classical knowledge, Lord Macaulay adds: 'It is melancholy to see how helplessly he gropes his way from blunder to blunder. He assigns as grounds for his religious belief stories as absurd as that of the Cock Lane Ghost, and forgeries as rank as Ireland's Vortigern; puts faith in the lie about the Thundering Legion; is convinced that Tiberius moved the senate to

[1] Courthope's *Addison*, p. 150.

admit Jesus among the gods, and pronounces the letter of Agbarus, King of Edessa, to be a record of great authority. Nor were these errors the effects of superstition, for to superstition Addison was by no means prone. The truth is, that he was writing about what he did not understand.'

In 1716, after having been made one of the Commissioners for Trades and Colonies, he married the Countess Dowager of Warwick, with whom he had been acquainted for some years. The marriage, according to the doubtful authority of Pope, was not a happy one, and is said to have driven Addison to the consolations of the tavern. He did not need them long. In 1717 Sunderland became Prime Minister, and made Addison a Secretary of State, an appointment which he resigned eleven months afterwards; and in 1719 he died at Holland House at the age of forty-seven, leaving one daughter as the memorial of the union. He lies, as is fitting, in the great Abbey of which he has written so beautifully.

Tickell's noble tribute to his friend's memory belongs to the undying poetry which neither age nor fresher forms of verse can render obsolete. It must suffice to quote here a few lines from a poem which, despite some conventional expressions common to the time, is worthy of its theme throughout:

> 'If pensive to the rural shades I rove,
> His shape o'ertakes me in the lonely grove;
> 'Twas there of Just and Good he reasoned strong,
> Cleared some great truth, or raised some serious song;
> There patient showed us the wise course to steer,
> A candid censor, and a friend severe;
> There taught us how to live; and (oh! too high
> The price for knowledge) taught us how to die.'

There are few men of literary eminence in the eighteenth century of whom we know so little as of Addison. His

own *Spectator*, who never opened his lips but in his club, is scarcely more silent than the essayist's biographers, so trifling are the details they have to record beyond the bare facts of his official and literary career. Steele knew him better, and, in spite of an unhappy estrangement at the last, probably loved him more than anyone else, and had he written his story, as he once proposed doing, the narrative might have been charming; but, alas for Steele's resolutions!

That Addison was a shy man we know. Lord Chesterfield said he was the most timid man he ever knew; and it speaks well for his resolution and strength of purpose that he should have risen notwithstanding this timidity to so high a position in public affairs. His want of oratorical power was a drawback to his efficiency, and Sir James Macintosh was probably right in saying that Addison as Dean of St. Patrick's, and Swift as Secretary of State, would have been a happy stroke of fortune, putting each into the place most fitted for him. The essayist's reserve, while it closed his lips in general society, did not prevent him from being one of the most fascinating of companions in the freedom of conversation with a few intimate friends. Swift, Steele, and even Pope, testify to Addison's irresistible charm in the select society that he loved. Young said he could chain the attention of every hearer, and Lady Mary Montagu declared that he was the best company in the world.

Richard Steele (1672-1729).

Richard Steele was born in Dublin, 1672, of English parents, and educated at the Charterhouse, where, as we have said, Addison was at the same time a pupil. In 1690 he matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, Addison being then demy at Magdalen. Steele left college without taking a degree, and entered the army as a cadet. After a time he ob-

tained the rank of captain in Lord Lucas's fusiliers, and wrote his treatise, *The Christian Hero* (1701), with the design, he says, 'principally to fix upon his own mind a strong impression of virtue and religion in opposition to a stronger propensity towards unwarrantable pleasure.' Steele was an honest lover of the things most worthy of love, but his frailty too often proved stronger than his virtue, and the purpose of *The Christian Hero* was not answered.

Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profanity of the English Stage*, published in 1698, had made, as it well might, a powerful impression, and Steele, who was always ready to inculcate morality on other people, wrote four comedies with a moral purpose. *The Funeral; or Grief à-la-Mode* was acted with success at Drury Lane in 1701, and when published passed through several editions. *The Lying Lover* followed two years later, and was, in the comfortable judgment of the author, 'damned for its piety.' This was followed, in 1705, by *The Tender Husband*, a play suggested by the *Sicilien* of Molière, as *The Lying Lover* had been founded on the *Menteur* of Corneille. Many years later Steele's last play, *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), completed his performances as a dramatist. It was dedicated to the King, who is said to have sent the author £500. The modern reader will find little worthy of attention in the dramas of Steele. His sense of humour enlivens some of the scenes, and is, perhaps, chiefly visible in *The Funeral*; but for the most part dulness is in the ascendant, and the sentiment is frequently mawkish. *The Conscious Lovers*, said Parson Adams, contains 'some things almost solemn enough for a sermon.' This may be true, but we do not desire a sermon in a play, and Steele, who is always a lively essayist, loses his liveliness in writing for the stage. It

has been observed by Mr. Ward that, taking a hint from Colley Cibber, he 'became the real founder of that sentimental comedy which exercised so pernicious an influence upon the progress of our dramatic literature.' 'It would be unjust,' he adds, 'to hold him responsible for the feebleness of successors who were altogether deficient in the comic power which he undoubtedly even as a dramatist exhibits; but in so far as their aberrations were the result of his example, he must be held to have contributed, though with the best of motives, to the decline of the English drama.'[1] One of the prominent offenders who followed in Steele's wake was George Lillo (1693-1739), whose highly moral tragedies, written for the edification of playgoers, have the kind of tragic interest which is called forth by any commonplace tale of crime and misery. In Lillo's two most important dramas, *George Barnwell* (1731), a play founded on the old ballad, and *The Fatal Curiosity* (1736), there is a total absence of the elevation in character and language which gives dignity to tragedy. His plays are like tales of guilt arranged and amplified from the Newgate Calendar. The author wrote with a good purpose, and the public appreciated his work, but it is not dramatic art, and has no pretension to the name of literature.

Throughout his life Steele was at war with fortune. His hopefulness was inexhaustible, but he learnt no lessons from experience, and escaped from one slough to fall into another. He was as unthrifty as Goldsmith, whom in many respects he resembles, and his warm, impulsive nature was allied to a combativeness and jealousy which sometimes led him to quarrel with his best friends. Of his passion for the somewhat exacting lady whom he

[1] *English Dramatic Literature*, vol. ii., p. 603.

married,[1] and of the 400 and odd notelets addressed by the lover-husband to his 'dear, dearest Prue,' and 'absolute Governess,' it is enough to say here, that the story told offhand in his own words, shows how lovable the man was in spite of the faults which he never attempted to conceal. Only about a week before the marriage the lady had fair warning of one probable drawback to her happiness as a wife.[2] On the morning of August 30th, 1707, Steele advised his 'fair one' to look up to that heaven which had made her so sweet a companion, and in the evening of that day he wrote:

'Dear lovely Mrs. Scurlock,

'I have been in very good company, where your health, under the character of *the woman I loved best*, has been often drunk, so that I may say I am dead drunk for your sake, which is more than I *die for you*.

'Rich. Steele.'

After marriage Steele's extravagance and impecuniosity must have proved a severe trial to Prue. At times he would live in considerable style, and Berkeley, who writes, in 1713, of dining with him frequently at his house in Bloomsbury Square, praises his table, servants, and coach as 'very genteel.' At other times the family were without common necessaries, and on one occasion there was not 'an inch of candle, a pound of coal, or a bit of meat in the house.'

[1] 'It is a strange thing,' he writes, 'that you will not behave yourself with the obedience people of worse features do, but that I must be always giving you an account of every trifle and minute of my time.'

[2] Steele had been previously married to Mrs. Stretch, a widow, who possessed an estate in the West Indies; but the lady did not long survive the marriage.

On the 12th April, 1709, Steele issued the first number of the *Tatler*, its supposed author being the Isaac Bickerstaff, whose name, thanks to Swift, had been 'rendered famous through all parts of Europe.' The essays appeared every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, for the convenience of the post, and at the outset contained political news, which Steele, by his government appointment of Gazetteer, was enabled to supply. After awhile, however, much to the advantage of the *Tatler*, this news was dropped. The articles are dated from White's Chocolate-house, from Will's Coffee-house, from the Grecian, and from the St. James's. It is probable that the column in Defoe's *Review*, containing *Advice from the Scandal Club*, suggested his 'Lucubrations' to Steele. If so, it does not detract from his originality of treatment, for Defoe's town gossip is poor stuff. Addison, who knew nothing of the project beforehand, came, ere long, to his friend's assistance; but it was not until about eighty numbers had appeared, that he became a frequent contributor, and before that time Steele had made his mark. When the essays were afterwards reprinted in four volumes, Steele, who was never wanting in gratitude, generously acknowledged the help he had received. 'I fared,' he says, 'like a distressed prince who calls in a powerful neighbour to his aid. I was undone by my auxiliary. When I had once called him in, I could not subsist without dependence on him.' The *Tatler* still supplies delightful entertainment, and in the almost total absence of amusing and wholesome reading in Steele's time, must have proved a welcome companion. Readers who are inundated by what is called 'light literature' can with difficulty imagine the dearth suffered in Pope's day, when the interminable romances of Calprenède, of Mdlle. de Scuderi and her brother, and of Madame la Favette, were the

liveliest books considered fit for a modest woman to read. A novel, however, in ten volumes, like the *Grand Cyrus* or *Clelie*, had one advantage over the cheap fictions of our time, its interest was not soon exhausted.

The *Tatler* has claims upon the student's attention, apart from the entertainment it affords. Steele, who lived from hand to mouth, and wrote, as he lived, on the impulse of the moment, had unwittingly begun a work destined to form an epoch in English literature. The *Essay*, as we now understand the word, dates from the *Lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff*, and Steele and Addison, who may boast a numerous progeny, have in Charles Lamb the noblest of their sons.

On the 2nd January, 1711, Steele wrote the final number of the *Tatler*, partly on the plea that the essays would suffice to make four volumes, and partly because he was known to be the author, and could not, as Mr. Steele, attack vices with the freedom of Mr. Bickerstaff. Addison, who had done so much to assist Steele in his first venture, was as ignorant of his intention to close the work as he was of its initiation. Two months later *The Spectator* appeared, and this time the friends worked in concert. It proved a brilliantly successful partnership. The second number, in which the characters of the club are introduced, was written by Steele, and to him we owe the first sketch of the immortal Sir Roger de Coverley:

'When he is in town he lives in Soho Square. It is said he keeps himself a bachelor by reason he was crossed in love by a perverse, beautiful widow of the next county to him. Before his disappointment, Sir Roger was what you call a fine gentleman, had often supped with my Lord Rochester and Sir George Etheridge, fought a duel upon his first coming to town, and kicked bully Dawson in a public coffee-house for calling him youngster. But being

ill-used by the above-mentioned widow, he was very serious for a year and a half; and though, his temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself, and never dressed afterwards. He continues to wear a coat and doublet of the same cut that were in fashion at the time of his repulse, which, in his merry humours, he tells us has been in and out twelve times since he first wore it. . . . He is now in his fifty-sixth year, cheerful, gay, and hearty, keeps a good house both in town and country; a great lover of mankind; but there is such a mirthful cast in his behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed. His tenants grow rich, his servants look satisfied, all the young women profess love to him, and the young men are glad of his company. When he comes into a house he calls the servants by their names, and talks all the way upstairs to a visit. I must not omit that Sir Roger is a justice of the quorum; that he fills the chair at a quarter-session with great abilities; and three months ago gained universal applause by explaining a passage in the Game Act.'

In their daily issue, as well as afterwards in volumes, the essays had an extensive sale. They were to be found on every breakfast-table, and so popular did they prove, that when the imposition of a halfpenny tax destroyed a number of periodicals, Steele found it safe to double the price of the *Spectator*. The vivacity and humour of the paper were visible from the beginning. 'Mr. Steele,' Swift wrote, 'seems to have gathered new life, and to have a new fund of wit.' Of 555 papers, Addison wrote 274 and Steele 236, while the remaining forty-five were the work of occasional contributors. In the full tide of its success, and without any assigned reason, the *Spectator* was brought to a conclusion in December, 1712, and in the following spring Steele started the *Guardian*, which might

have been as fortunate as its predecessor, had not the editor's zeal tempted him to diverge to politics. He had also a disagreement with his publisher, and the *Guardian* was allowed but a short life of 175 numbers. Of these about fifty were due to Addison, and upwards of eighty to Steele.

Steele's political ardour was irrepressible, and a paper in the *Guardian* (No. 128), demanding the abolition of Dunkirk, called forth a pamphlet from Swift, in which the weaknesses of his former friend are sneered at and denounced with enough of truthfulness to enhance their malice. After allowing that Steele has humour, and is no disagreeable companion 'after the first bottle,' Swift adds, 'Being the most imprudent man alive, he never follows the advice of his friends, but is wholly at the mercy of fools and knaves, or hurried away by his own caprice, by which he has committed more absurdities in economy, friendship, love, duty, good manners, politics, religion, and writing than ever fell to one man's share.' A little later, in anticipation of the Queen's death, Steele published *The Crisis* (1714), a political pamphlet, which led to his expulsion from the House of Commons. It was answered by one of the most masterly of Swift's pamphlets, *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*, in which it is suggested that Steele might be superior to other writers on the Whig side 'provided he would a little regard the propriety and disposition of his words, consult the grammatical part, and get some information in the subject he intends to handle.'

The reader is chiefly concerned with Steele as an essayist, and it is unnecessary to follow his career in the House of Commons and out of it. Yet there is one anecdote too characteristic to be omitted in the briefest notice of his life. Lady Charlotte Finch had been attacked in the *Examiner* 'for knotting in St. James's Chapel during

divine service, in the immediate presence both of God and her Majesty, who were affronted together.' Steele denounced the calumny in the *Guardian*. Upon taking his seat as member for Stockbridge, he was attacked by the Tories on account of *The Crisis*, which they deemed an inflammatory libel, and defended himself in a speech which occupied three hours. When he left the House, Lord Finch, who, like Steele, was a new member, rose to make his maiden speech in defence of the man who had defended his sister; a nervous feeling caused him to hesitate, and he sat down, exclaiming, 'It is strange I cannot speak for this man, though I could readily fight for him." The House cheered these generous words, and Lord Finch rising again, made an able speech. The effort was a vain one, and Steele lost his seat. A few months later, after the death of Queen Anne, he entered the House again as member for Boroughbridge, and having been placed in the commission of peace for Middlesex, on presenting an address from the county, he received the honour of knighthood.

Meanwhile he had not renounced his vocation of essayist. The *Guardian* was followed by the *Englishman* (1713), the *Englishman* by the *Lover* (1714), and the *Lover* by the *Reader* (1714), a journal strongly political in character. Of this only nine numbers were issued. Then came *Town Talk*, the *Tea Table*, *Chit chat*, and the *Theatre*. Sir Richard appears to have been always in a hurry to break new ground, a foible not confined to literature. He was continually starting new projects, and never doubted, in spite of numberless failures, that his latest effort to make a fortune would be successful.

Notwithstanding his appointments as manager of Drury Lane and as a Commissioner in Scotland to inquire into the Estates of Traitors, Steele's money difficulties did not lessen as he advanced in life; worse still, he had the misfortune to

quarrel with his oldest and dearest friend. For this he and Addison were alike to blame, and Addison dying a few months later, there was no time for reconciliation. In 1718 Steele had lost his wife, and some years afterwards his only remaining son. Ultimately, broken in health and fortune, Sir Richard retired to Carmarthen, and there, in 1729, he died.

'I was told,' says Victor, 'he retained his cheerful sweetness of temper to the last; and would often be carried out in a summer's evening, when the country lads and lasses were assembled at their rural sports, and with his pencil give an order on his agent, the mercer, for a new gown to the best dancer.'[1]

All literature worthy of the name is the expression of the writer's life, of his aspirations, and of his ultimate aims; and since man is a moral being, it cannot be severed from morality. To point a moral, if it be within the scope of imaginative art, is subordinate to its main purpose. To delight by stimulating the imagination, to give a new beauty to existence by widening the realm of thought, —these are some of the noblest purposes of literature; and while men and women of creative genius are among our wisest teachers, the wisdom we gain from them comes to us without direct enforcement. In the last century, however, authors of good character, and authors who had no character to boast of, were equally impressed with the necessity of adorning their pages with moral maxims, and if this moral was not inserted in the body of the work, it was inevitable that it should be tacked on to the end of it like a tail to a kite. Steele in his artless way had a moral end in view, though his method of reaching it was not always wise or even discreet. Addison had his moral also. It pervades everything he wrote, but so artfully does

[1] Victor's *Original Letters, Dramatic Pieces, and Poems*, vol. i., p. 330

he make use of it, that the reader is not unpleasantly conscious of a purpose. His allegories belong to an obsolete form of literature, but one of them at least *The Vision of Mirza*, may be still read with pleasure. His Saturday essays, which are nearly always serious in character, are the sermons of a layman, expressed in the most lucid style and in the purest English. His tales, like his allegories, have lost much of their flavour, but the humorous essays, in which he depicts the manners of the time, as well as the numbers devoted to the Spectator Club and to Addison's beloved Sir Roger, have a perennial charm. There is a felicity in the essayist's touch which is beyond imitation, although a reader might give, as Johnson suggested, days and nights to the study. The style is the man, and to write as Addison wrote it would be necessary to reach his moral and intellectual level, to see with his shrewd but kindly eyes, and to have his fine sense of humour. His faults, too, must be shared by his imitator —the somewhat too delicate refinement of a nature that never yields to impulse—the feminine sensitiveness that is allied to jealousy. Addison, in the judgment of his admirers, comes very near to perfection, and that is an irritating quality in a fellow mortal. It is, if it be not paradoxical to say so, the defect of his essays. There is nothing definite to find fault with in them, but we feel that strength is wanting. The clear and silent stream is a beautiful object, but after awhile it becomes monotonous, and we long for the swift and impetuous movement of a mountain torrent. It would be a thankless task, however, to dwell insistently on the deficiencies of a writer who has done so much for literature, and so much, too, for what is better than literature. We may wish that he had more warmth in him, somewhat more of energy and passion, yet such merits would be scarcely consonant with the graceful charm which gives to

the prose writings of Addison an unrivalled position in Pope's age, and, it might be added, in the eighteenth century, were it not for the priceless literary gift bestowed upon Oliver Goldsmith.

Steele's fame as a writer has been overshadowed by the more exquisite genius of Addison, and his reputation has suffered partly from his own frailties and partly from the contemptuous way in which he has been treated by the panegyrists and critics of Addison. Pity is closely allied to contempt, and Sir Richard has come to be regarded as a scapegrace whose chief honour in life was the friendship of the accomplished essayist. Yet it was Steele who created the form of literature in which Addison earned his laurels, and without which he would in the present day be utterly forgotten. Steele was the discoverer of a new country, and if Addison took possession of its fairest portion, it was after his friend had pointed out the path and made the way easy. It would be very unjust, however, to treat of Steele solely as a pioneer. His own work, though less perfect than that of Addison, a consummate master of composition, is rich in variety and spirit, in pathos and in knowledge of the world. Steele is often careless, but he is never dull, and writes with a glow of enthusiasm that excites the reader's sympathy. Truly does Mr. Dobson say that while Addison's essays are faultless in their art and beyond the range of his friend's more impulsive nature, 'for words which the heart finds when the head is seeking; for phrases glowing with the white heat of a generous emotion; for sentences which throb and tingle with manly pity or courageous indignation, we must go to the essays of Steele.'[1]

Sir Richard's pathetic touches and artless turns of ex-

[1] *Selections from Steele*, by Austin Dobson. Introduction, p. xxx. Clarendon Press.

pression come from the heart. He is the most natural of writers, but does not seem to be aware that nature, in order to be converted into good literature, needs a little clothing. His essays have often a looseness or negligence of aim unpardonable in a man who can write so well. A conspicuous illustration of this defect may be seen in No. 181 of the *Tatler*, one of the most beautiful pieces from Steele's pen.

'The first sense of sorrow,' he writes, 'I ever knew was upon the death of my father, at which time I was not quite five years of age; but was rather amazed at what all the house meant, than possessed with a real understanding why nobody was willing to play with me. I remember I went into the room where his body lay, and my mother sat weeping alone by it. I had my battledore in my hand, and fell a-beating the coffin and calling "Papa," for, I know not how, I had some slight idea that he was locked up there. My mother catched me in her arms, and transported beyond all patience of the silent grief she was before in, she almost smothered me in her embraces; and told me in a flood of tears, "Papa could not hear me, and would play with me no more, for they were going to put him under ground, whence he could never come to us again." She was a very beautiful woman of a noble spirit, and there was a dignity in her grief amidst all the wildness of her transport, which, methought, struck me with an instinct of sorrow, that before I was sensible of what it was to grieve, seized my very soul, and has made pity the weakness of my heart ever since.'

Later on in the essay, and still looking back on the past, Steele recalls the untimely death of the first object his eyes ever beheld with love, and then abruptly dismissing his regrets he carelessly finishes the paper with this characteristic passage: 'A large train of disasters were coming

on to my memory when my servant knocked at my closet door, and interrupted me with a letter, attended with a hamper of wine of the same sort with that which is to be put to sale on Thursday next at Garraway's Coffee-house. Upon the receipt of it I sent for three of my friends. We are so intimate that we can be company in whatever state of mind we meet, and can entertain each other without expecting always to rejoice. The wine we found to be generous and warming, but with such a heat as moved us rather to be cheerful than frolicsome. It revived the spirits, without firing the blood. We commended it until two of the clock this morning, and having to-day met a little before dinner, we found that though we drank two bottles a man, we had much more reason to recollect than forget what had passed the night before.'

Steele, to quote Johnson's phrase, was 'the most agreeable rake that ever trod the rounds of indulgence,' but he had many a fine quality that does not harmonize with the character of a rake; and although he hurt himself by his follies, he did his best to help others by his genial wisdom. If he did not sufficiently regard his own interests, his thoughts, as Addison said, 'teemed with projects for his country's good.' Savage Landor, with an impulse of somewhat extravagant eulogy, exclaimed, 'What a good critic Steele was! I doubt if he has ever been surpassed.' This is one of the sayings that will not bear examination. Steele had doubtless the fine perception of what is noble in art and literature, which some men possess instinctively. He felt what was good, but does not appear either to have reached or strengthened his conclusions by any process of study.

As an essayist Steele is careless, rapid, emotional, and disposed to be on the best terms with himself and with his readers. He makes them sure that if they could have met

him in his rollicking mood at Will's Coffee-house, he would have treated them all round, even if, like Goldsmith, he had been forced to borrow the money to do it. But he was not always in this reckless humour. His heart was expansive in its sympathies and tender as a woman's; his mind was open to all kindly influences, and his essays have in them the rich blood and vivid utterances of a man who has 'warmed both hands before the fire of life.'

Between Steele's *Guardian* (1713) and the *Rambler* of Johnson (1750), a period of thirty-seven years, a swarm of periodicals testify to the fame of Steele and Addison. The reader curious on the subject will find in Dr. Drake's essays a minute account of the numerous essayists who flourished, or who made an effort to live, between the close of the eighth volume of the *Spectator* and the beginning of the present century. Of these a few have still a place on our shelves, but for the most part they enjoyed a butterfly existence, and serve but to prove the immeasurable superiority of the writers who created the English Essay.

CHAPTER V.

JONATHAN SWIFT—JOHN ARBUTHNOT.

The booksellers who employed the most famous man of letters then living (1777), to write the *Lives of the Poets*, selected the authors whose biographies were to accompany the poems they proposed to publish. They did not know the difference between versemakers and poets; but they probably did know what authors of the rhyming tribe were likely to prove the most popular. Dr. Johnson, who was then in his sixty-ninth year, was willing to write the *Lives* to order. He added, indeed, three or four names to the list which had been given him; but he made no protest, and contented himself, as he told Boswell, in saying that a man was a dunce when he thought that he was one.

Among the biographies included by Johnson in the *Lives*, appears the illustrious name of Swift. He was far indeed from being a dunce; but just as certainly he was not a poet, unless the title be given to him by courtesy. On the other hand, Swift ranks among the most distinguished prose writers of his time—many critics consider him the greatest—and he therefore finds his natural place in the prose section of this volume.

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745).

Swift's life is an extraordinary psychological study, but it will suffice to state here the bare outline of his career. He was a posthumous child, and born in Dublin of English parents, November 30th, 1667. When a year old he was kidnapped

by his nurse out of pure affection, and carried off to Whitehaven, where she remained with the child for three years. At the age of six the boy was sent to Kilkenny school, and there he had William Congreve (1670-1729), the future dramatist, for a schoolfellow. Neither at school nor at Trinity College, Dublin, which he entered as a boy of fifteen, did Swift distinguish himself, and he left the University in disgrace. At the Revolution he found a refuge with his mother at Leicester, and she, through a family relationship, obtained a position for her boy in the house of Sir William Temple (1628-1698), who was accounted a great man in his own day, and was famous alike for statecraft and literature. By many readers he will be best remembered as the husband of the charming Dorothy Osborne, whose innocently sweet love-letters have not lost their freshness in the lapse of two centuries.

There was a degree of servitude in Swift's position of secretary, which galled his proud spirit. But Temple, so far from treating him unkindly, introduced him to the King, and employed him in 'affairs of great importance.' In 1694 he left Temple, went to Dublin, took holy orders, and lived as prebend of Kilroot on £100 a year. In 1696 he resigned the office and returned to Moor Park, where he remained until Sir William Temple's death, in 1699. There he studied hard, ran up a steep hill daily for exercise, and cultivated the acquaintance of Esther Johnson, the 'Stella' destined to take a strange part in Swift's history, then a mere girl, and a companion of Temple's sister, who lived with him after his wife's death.

Swift began his literary career by writing Pindaric odes, one of which led Dryden to say, and the prediction was amply verified, 'Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet.' Probably no man of genius ever wrote worse poetry than is to be found in these portentous efforts.

Here is one fair illustration of his flights as an ode writer, and the reader will not ask for more :

'Were I to form a regular thought of Fame,
Which is perhaps, as hard to imagine right
As to paint Echo to the sight,
I would not draw the idea from an empty name;
Because, alas! when we all die,
Careless and ignorant posterity,
Although they praise the learning and the wit,
And though the title seems to show
The name and man by whom the book was writ,
Yet how shall they be brought to know
Whether that very name was he, or you, or I?
Less should I daub it o'er with transitory praise,
And water-colours of these days:
These days! where e'en th' extravagance of poetry
Is at a loss for figures to express
Men's folly, whimsies, and inconstancy,
And by a faint description makes them less.
Then tell us what is Fame, where shall we search for it?
Look where exalted Virtue and Religion sit,
Enthroned with heavenly Wit!
Look where you see
The greatest scorn of learned Vanity!
(And then how much a nothing is mankind!
Whose reason is weighed down by popular air.
Who, by that, vainly talks of baffling death,
And hopes to lengthen life by a transfusion of breath,
Which yet whoe'er examines right will find
To be an art as vain as bottling up of wind!)
And when you find out these, believe true Fame is there,
Far above all reward, yet to which all is due;
And this, ye great unknown! is only known in you.'

It is remarkable that at the very time Swift was perpetrating these lyrical atrocities, he was at work on the *Tale of a Tub*, which is generally regarded as the most masterly effort of his genius. A critic has said that Swift's poetry 'lacks one quality only—imagination,' but verse without

imagination is like a body without a soul, like a house without windows, like a landscape-painting without atmosphere, and no license of language will allow us to call Swift a poet. Enough that he became a master of rhyme, and used it with extraordinary facility. Dr. Johnson's estimate of Swift's powers in this respect is a just one:

'In the poetical works of Dr. Swift there is not much upon which the critic can exercise his powers. They are often humorous, almost always light, and have the qualities which recommend such compositions, ease and gaiety. They are, for the most part, what their author intended. The diction is correct, the numbers are smooth, and the rhymes exact. There seldom occurs a hard-laboured expression, or a redundant epithet; all his verses exemplify his own definition of a good style; they consist of proper words in proper places.'

The merits with which Swift's verse is credited are, therefore, not poetical merits, unless we accept what Schlegel calls the miserable doctrine of Boileau, that the essence of poetry consists in diction and versification.

The great bulk of Swift's verse is suggested by the incidents of the hour. No subject is too trivial for his pen; but the poems which are addressed to Stella, and others which, like *Cadenus and Vanessa*, and *On the Death of Dr. Swift*, have a personal interest, are by far the most attractive. We see the best side of Swift when he addresses Stella, whether in verse or prose. The birthday rhymes he delighted to write in her praise have the mark of sincerity, and there is true feeling in the lines which describe her as a ministering angel in his sickness:

> 'When on my sickly couch I lay,
> Impatient both of night and day,
> Lamenting in unmanly strains,
> Called every power to ease my pains;

Then Stella ran to my relief
With cheerful face and inward grief;
And though by Heaven's severe decree
She suffers hourly more than me,
No cruel master could require
From slaves employed for daily hire,
What Stella, by her friendship warmed,
With vigour and delight performed;
My sinking spirits now supplies
With cordials in her hands and eyes,
Now with a soft and silent tread
Unheard she moves about my bed.
I see her taste each nauseous draught
And so obligingly am caught,
I bless the hand from whence they came,
Nor dare distort my face for shame.'

The poem in which Swift imagines what will take place upon his death, is full of satiric humour, combined with that vein of bitterness that is never long absent from his writings. His humour is always allied to sadness; his mirth often sounds like a cry of misery. In this poem he pictures his gradual decay, and how his special friends, anticipating the end, will show their tenderness by adding largely to his years:

'He's older than he would be reckoned,
And well remembers Charles the Second.
He hardly drinks a pint of wine,
And that I doubt is no good sign.
His stomach too begins to fail,
Last year we thought him strong and hale,
But now he's quite another thing,
I wish he may hold out till Spring.'

No enemy can match a friend, Swift adds, in portending a great misfortune:

'He'd rather choose that I should die
Than his prediction prove a lie,

No one foretells I shall recover,
But all agree to give me over.'

So he dies, and the first question asked is, 'What has he left and who's his heir?' and when these questions are answered, the Dean is blamed for his bequests. The news spreads to London and is told at Court:

'Kind Lady Suffolk, in the spleen,
Runs laughing up to tell the Queen.
The Queen so gracious, mild, and good,
Cries, "Is he gone? 'tis time he should."'

But the loss of the Dean will cause a brief regret to his most intimate friends:

'Poor Pope will grieve a month; and Gay
A week; and Arbuthnot a day.
St. John himself will scarce forbear
To bite his pen and drop a tear.
The rest will give a shrug, and cry,
"I'm sorry—but we all must die."'

Why grieve, indeed, at the death of friends, since no loss is more easy to supply, and in a year the Dean will be forgotten, and his wit be out of date.

'Some country squire to Lintot goes,
Inquires for "Swift in Verse and Prose."
Says Lintot, "I have heard the name;
He died a year ago." "The same."
He searches all the shop in vain.
"Sir, you may find them in Duck Lane,
I sent them with a load of books
Last Monday to the pastrycook's.
To fancy they could live a year!
I find you're but a stranger here.
The Dean was famous in his time,
And had a kind of knack at rhyme.
His way of writing now is past,
The town has got a better taste."'

Enough has been transcribed to show Swift's art in this poem, which is of considerable, but not of wearisome length. Perhaps ten or twelve pieces, in addition to those already mentioned, will repay the student's attention. One of the worthiest is a *Rhapsody on Poetry*. *Baucis and Philemon*, too, is a lively piece that pleased Goldsmith, and will please every reader. It was much altered from the original draught at Addison's suggestion; but the alterations are not improvements.[1] *The City Shower* is a piece of Dutch painting, reminding us of Crabbe. *Mrs. Harris's Petition* is an admirable bit of fooling; *Mary the Cook-Maid's Letter*, is in its way inimitable; and so, too, is the amusing talk of 'my lady's waiting-woman' in *The Grand Question Debated*.

It is difficult, unhappily, to pursue one's way through Swift's poems, without being repelled again and again by the filth in which it pleases him to wade. *The Beast's Confession*, which has been reprinted in the *Selections from Swift* (Clarendon Press), is not obscene, like *The Lady's Dressing-Room*, *Strephon and Chloe*, and other poems of the class; but it has the inhumanity which deforms the description of the Houyhnhnms. Strange to say, in private life Swift appears to have been not only moral in conduct, but refined in conversation, and he is even said to have rebuked Stella on one occasion for a slightly coarse remark. His imagination was diseased, and he was himself always apprehensive of the calamity under which he became at last 'a driveller and a show.' 'I shall be like that tree,' he said once to the poet Young, 'I shall die at the top.'

[1] *Life of Jonathan Swift*, by John Forster, vol. i., pp. 164-174. Mr. Forster did not live to produce more than one volume of a work to which for many years he had given 'much labour and time.'

It has been already said that *The Tale of a Tub* was written at Moor Park. It appeared in 1704, and although published anonymously and never owned, the book effectually stood in the way of Swift's high preferment in the Church. Queen Anne declined, and not without reason, to make its author a bishop.

It is a satire of amazing power, written by a man who takes, as Swift took throughout life, a misanthropical view of human nature, and who agrees with the cynical judgment of Carlyle, that men are mostly fools. Swift, however, did not consider fools useless, but observes that they 'are as necessary for a good writer as pen, ink, and paper.' Never was volume written which betrayed in larger characters the opinions and disposition of its author. Swift was consistent in defending the National Church as a political institution; but in the *Tale of a Tub* he does so with weapons an atheist might use if he possessed the skill. The author maintains that in his ridicule of the Church of Rome and of Protestant dissenters, he is only displaying the abuses which deform the Christian Church; but no defence can be urged for his wild and irreverent method of turning subjects into ridicule which by a vast number of people are regarded as sacred. In judging of Swift's satire from a moral standing-point, one test, as Mr. Leslie Stephen observes, may be supposed to guide our decision. 'Imagine the *Tale of a Tub* to be read by Bishop Butler and by Voltaire, who called Swift a *Rabelais perfectionné*. Can anyone doubt that the believer would be scandalized, and the scoffer find himself in a thoroughly congenial element? Would not any believer shrink from the use of such weapons, even though directed against his enemies?'[1]

[1] *English Men of Letters—Jonathan Swift*, by Leslie Stephen, p. 43.

Although the wit poured out with such profusion in the *Tale of a Tub*, in so far as it offends the moral sense, fails to give pleasure, the reader is astonished, as Swift in later life was himself, at the genius displayed in this allegory, the argument of which may be told in a few words.

A man is supposed to have three sons by one wife, and all at a birth. On his deathbed he leaves to each of them a new coat, which he says will grow with their growth, and last as long as they live. In his will he leaves directions, saying how the coats are to be used, and warning them against neglecting his instructions. For some years all goes well, the will is studied and followed, and the brothers, Peter (the Church of Rome), Martin (the Church of England), and Jack (the Calvinist), live in unity. How by degrees they misinterpret their father's will, how Peter begins by adding topknots to his coat, and afterwards grows so scandalous that his brothers resolve to leave him, and then fall out between themselves, is told with abundant wit. A great part of the volume consists of digressions written in Swift's most vigorous style, and with the cynical humour in which he has no competitor.

It is always interesting to observe the influence of a work of genius on other minds, and in connection with the *Tale of a Tub* a story told of his boyhood by William Cobbett is worth recording:

'I was trudging through Richmond,' he writes, 'in my blue smock-frock, and my red garters tied under my knees, when, staring about me, my eyes fell upon a little book in a bookseller's window, on the outside of which was written, "*Tale of a Tub*, price threepence." The title was so odd that my curiosity was excited. . . . It was something so new to my mind that though I could not at all understand some of it, it delighted me beyond description; and it produced what I have always considered a sort of birth of in-

tellect. I read on till it was dark, without any thought of supper or bed.' Cobbett adds, that having read till he could see no longer, he put the volume in his pocket, and 'tumbled down' by the side of a haystack, 'where I slept till the birds in Kew Gardens awakened me in the morning; when off I started to Kew, reading my little book.'

One of the greatest masters of prose in the language has also recorded the impression made upon him by this wonderful book. At the age of eighty-three Landor wrote: 'I am reading once more the work I have read oftener than any other prose work in our language. . . What a writer! Not the most imaginative or the most simple, not Bacon or Goldsmith had the power of saying more forcibly or completely whatever he meant to say.' 'Simplicity,' said Swift, 'is the best and truest ornament of most things in human life;' and Landor, commenting on Swift's style, observes that 'he never attempted to round his sentences by redundant words, aware that from the simplest and the fewest arise the secret springs of genuine harmony.'

The volume containing the *Tale of a Tub* had also within its covers the *Battle of the Books*, which was suggested by a controversy that originated in France, and had been carried on by Sir W. Temple in England, as to the relative merits of the Ancients and the Moderns. Out of this, too, arose a discussion by some *savants*, with Richard Bentley (1662-1742), the greatest scholar of the age, at their head, with regard to the genuineness of the *Epistles of Phalaris*, a subject discussed in Macaulay's essay on Temple in his usually brilliant style. Swift, in the *Battle of the Books* sides with Temple and with Charles Boyle, the nominal editor of the *Epistles*, who, in the famous *Reply to Bentley*, fought behind the shield of Atterbury. In a combat, which takes place in the Homeric style, the enemies of the Ancients, Bentley and Wotton, are slain by one

lance upon the field. The mighty deed was achieved by Boyle. 'As when a slender cook has trussed a brace of woodcocks, he with iron skewer pierces the tender sides of both, their legs and wings close pinioned to their ribs, so was this pair of friends transfixed, till down they fell joined in their lives, joined in their deaths; so closely joined, that Charon would mistake them both for one, and waft them over Styx for half his fare.' The humour of the piece is delightful, and it matters not a whit for the enjoyment of it, that the wrong heroes gain the victory.

In 1708 Swift produced several pamphlets or tracts, and in one of them, the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity*, he found ample scope for the irony of which he was so consummate a master.

'Great wits,' he writes, 'love to be free with the highest objects; and if they cannot be allowed a God to revile or renounce, they will speak evil of dignities, abuse the Government, and reflect upon the ministry; which I am sure few will deny to be of much more pernicious consequence;' and he observes, in concluding the argument: 'Whatever some may think of the great advantages to trade by this favourite scheme, I do very much apprehend that in six months' time the Bank and East India Stock may fall at least one *per cent.* And since that is fifty times more than ever the wisdom of our age thought fit to venture for the preservation of Christianity, there is no reason we should be at so great a loss merely for the sake of destroying it.'

An amusing piece which appeared also at this time from Swift's pen, is of literary interest. Under the name of Isaac Bickerstaff he predicted the death, upon a certain day, of Partridge, a notorious astrologer and almanac maker. When the day arrived his decease was announced, and he was afterwards decently buried by Swift, despite a loud protest from the poor man that he was not

only alive, but well and hearty. The town took up the joke, all the wits joined in it, and Steele, who started the *Tatler* in the following year (1709), found it of advantage to assume the name of Bickerstaff, which these squibs had made so popular. Swift loved practical jokes, and sometimes yielded to a license that bordered on buffoonery. He was now in London, charged with a mission from the Irish Church, and hoping for Church preferment himself. With the latter object in view he published the *Sentiments of a Church of England Man* (1708). Two years later, vexed at heart at being unable to gain for the Irish clergy privileges enjoyed by their English brethren, and foiled, too, in his ambition, Swift forsook the Whig party, which he had never loved, and going over to the Tories, fought their battle for some years with so masterly a pen, as to become a great power in the country.

Some time before his return to London in 1710, a weekly Tory paper had been started by Bolingbroke and Prior called *The Examiner*, and in opposition to it, upon September 14th in that year, Addison produced the *Whig Examiner* which lived a brief life of five numbers and died on the 8th of October. Three weeks later, on the 2nd November, after thirteen numbers of the *Examiner* had been published, Swift took up the pen, and from that date to June 14th, 1711, every paper was from his hand. Never before had a political journal exercised such power. In his change of party Swift was sincere in purpose, but unscrupulous in his methods of pursuing it, and to gain his ends told lies with a vigour that has rarely been surpassed. He is never delicate in his treatment of opponents, and when finer weapons would be useless, strikes with a sledge hammer. That such a writer, a master of every method most effective in controversy, should have

been valued by the statesmen of the day is not surprising. When he forsook the Whig camp there was no opponent to pit against him, for neither Addison with his delicate humour, nor Steele with his brightness and versatility, could grapple with an enemy like this.

Swift's arrogance in these days of his power was that of a despot. He was doing great things for ministers, and took care that they should know it. He was proud of his self-assertion, proud of being rude. Great men, and great ladies too, who wished for his acquaintance, had to make the first advances. He caused Lady Burlington to burst into tears by rudely ordering her to sing. 'She should sing or he would make her.' 'I was at court and church to-day,' he tells Stella, 'I generally am acquainted with about thirty in the drawing-room, and am so proud I make all the lords come up to me.' On one occasion he sent the Lord Treasurer into the House of Commons to call out the principal Secretary of State in order to say that he would not dine with him if he intended to dine late. He relates, too, how he warned St. John not to appear cold to him, for he would not be treated like a schoolboy, and if he heard or saw anything to his disadvantage to let him know in plain words, and not to put him in pain by the change of his behaviour, for it was what he would hardly bear from a crowned head. 'If we let these great ministers pretend too much,' he says, 'there will be no governing them.' And in a letter to Pope he makes the following confession: 'All my endeavours from a boy to distinguish myself were only for want of a great title and fortune that I might be treated like a lord . . . . whether right or wrong it is no great matter; and so the reputation of great learning does the work of a blue ribbon, and of a coach and six horses.'

It would be out of place in this volume to dwell on Swift's feats as a political writer; for us the most interest-

ing fact connected with the years 1710-14 is that during that eventful period of Swift's life, in which he was hobnobbing with Ministers of State and doing them infinite service by his pen, he was writing at odd moments his inimitable *Journal to Stella*, and gaining the love which ended so tragically, of Hester Vanhomrigh. This strange chapter in Swift's life is closely bound up with his literary history, and must therefore be briefly noticed.

At Moor Park, Swift, who was more than twenty years her senior, had seen Esther Johnson growing up into womanhood. He had been to her as a master, a position he always liked to assume towards women.[1] When he settled in Ireland it was arranged that Esther and her companion, Mrs. Dingley, should also live there. Her preceptor, in his regard for propriety, appears never to have seen Esther apart from the useful Dingley, and his letters are apparently addressed to both of them, but Esther knew, as we know, that all the tenderness and affectionate humour they contain was meant for her alone. Swift never writes as a lover, but the kind of love he gave to 'Stella' sufficed to bind her to him for life. If there were moments when she wished to escape from his power, the wish was hopeless. Having once submitted to his fascination, she was held by it to the end. Hester Vanhomrigh, who was about ten years younger than Stella, felt the same spell, and having a far less restrained nature than Miss Johnson, gave free expression to the passion which

[1] Mrs. Pendarves writes (1733) 'The day before we came out of town we dined at Doctor Delany's, and met the usual company. The Dean of St. Patrick's was there *in very good humour*, he calls himself "*my master*," and corrects me when I speak bad English or do not pronounce my words distinctly. I wish he lived in England, I should not only have a great deal of entertainment from him, but improvement.'—*Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany*, vol. i., p. 407.

devoured her. Between his two admirers, for such they were, Swift had a difficult course to steer. To Stella he was linked by strong ties of companionship, and to her, according to some authorities, he was secretly married. Whether this were the case or not she had the larger claims upon him, and if one of the twain had to be sacrificed, Vanessa must be the victim.

In *Cadenus and Vanessa* (1713) a poem which every student of Swift will read, the author strove to achieve an impossibility. His aim was to ignore the lover and to assume the character of a master to an intelligent and favourite pupil, or of a father to a daughter. His dignity and age, he says, forbade the thought of warmer feelings.

> 'But friendship in its greatest height,
> A constant rational delight,
> On Virtue's basis fixed to last
> When love's allurements long are past,
> Which gently warms but cannot burn,
> He gladly offers in return;
> His want of passion will redeem
> With gratitude, respect, esteem;
> With that devotion we bestow
> When goddesses appear below.'

And this was Swift's method of dealing with a woman who confessed the 'inexpressible passion' she had for him, and that his 'dear image' was always before her eyes. 'Sometimes,' she wrote, 'you strike me with that prodigious awe, I tremble with fear; at other times a charming compassion shines through your countenance which moves my soul.' Swift had acted far more than indiscreetly in encouraging a friendship with Vanessa, and when she followed him to Dublin, in the neighbourhood of which she had some property, he knew not how to escape from the snare his own folly had laid. To Stella he had given 'friendship and esteem,' but, as he is careful to add, 'ne'er admitted love a

guest;' the same cold gift was offered to Vanessa, but in vain. According to a report, the authority of which is doubtful, Miss Vanhomrigh wrote to Stella, in 1723, asking if she was Swift's wife. She replied that she was, and sent the letter she had received to Swift. In a towering passion he rode to Vanessa's house, threw the letter on the table, and left again without saying a word. The blow was fatal, and Vanessa died soon afterwards, revoking her will in Swift's favour and leaving to him the legacy of remorse. Having told in outline this episode in Swift's story, I return to the *Journal to Stella*, which dates from September 2nd, 1710, to June 6th, 1713.

Little did Swift imagine that the chit-chat he was writing every day for Esther Johnson's sake would be read and enjoyed by thousands who care little or nothing for the party questions upon which the strenuous efforts of his intellect were expended. The early years of the eighteenth century contain nothing more delightful than this *Journal*. Its gossip, its nonsense, its freshness and ease of style, the tenderness concealed, or half-revealed, in its 'little language,' and the illustrations it supplies incidentally of the manners of the court and town, these are some of the charms that make us turn again and again to its pages with ever-increasing pleasure. We enjoy Swift's egotism and trivialities, as we enjoy the egotism of Pepys or Montaigne, and can imagine the eagerness with which the *Letters* were read by the lovely woman whose destiny it was to receive everything from Swift save the love which has its consummation in marriage. The style of the *Journal* is not that of an author composing, but of a companion talking; and it is all the more interesting since it reveals Swift's character under a pleasanter aspect than any of his formal writings. We see in it what a warm heart he had for the friends whom he had once learnt to love, and with

what zeal he exerted himself in assisting brother-authors, while receiving little beyond empty praise from ministers himself.

In the winter of 1713-14 Swift joined the Scriblerus Club, an association of such wits as Pope, Parnell, Arbuthnot, and Gay, and it was about this time that his friendship with Pope began. The members proposed writing a satire between them, and when Swift was exiled to Dublin as Dean of St. Patrick's, he pursued indirectly the suggestion of the Scriblerus wits by writing *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), a book that has made his name known throughout Europe, and in all the lands where English literature is read. Although Swift did not hesitate to make use of hints and descriptions which he had met with in the course of his reading, this is one of the most original works of fiction ever written, and one of the wittiest. Yet like almost everything that Swift wrote, it is deformed by grossness of expression, and in the latter portion by a malignant contempt for human nature which betrays a diseased imagination. The stories of the Lilliputians and Brobdingnags, purified from coarse allusions, are the delight of children; but the description of the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos excites disgust and indignation. He said that his object in writing the satire was to vex the world, and he has succeeded.

'It cannot be denied,' says Sir Walter Scott, one of the sanest and healthiest of imaginative writers, 'that even a moral purpose will not justify the nakedness with which Swift has sketched this horrible outline of mankind degraded to a bestial state; since a moralist ought to hold with the Romans that crimes of atrocity should be exposed when punished, but those of flagitious impurity concealed. In point of probability, too—for there are degrees of probability, proper even to the wildest fiction—the fourth part

of *Gulliver* is inferior to the three others. . . . The mind rejects, as utterly impossible, the supposition of a nation of horses, placed in houses which they could not build, fed with corn which they could neither sow, reap, nor save, possessing cows which they could not milk, depositing that milk in vessels which they could not make, and, in short, performing a hundred purposes of rational and social life for which their external structure altogether unfits them.'[1]

Neither morality, nor a regard for probability are so outraged in the story of the Lilliputians and Brobdingnags.

Having once accepted Swift's assumption of the existence of little people not six inches high, and of a country in which the inhabitants 'appeared as tall as an ordinary spire-steeple,' the exactness and verisimilitude of the narrative, with its minute geographical details, make it appear so reasonable that a young reader may feel inclined to resent the criticism of an Irish bishop who said that 'the book was full of improbable lies, and for his part he hardly believed a word of it.' It is curious to note that Swift, who made a strange vow in early life 'not to be fond of children, or let them come near me hardly,' should have done more to delight them than any author of his century, with the exception, perhaps, of Defoe. Gay and Pope wrote a joint letter to Swift on the appearance of the *Travels*, pretending that they did not know the author, and advising him to get the book if it had not yet reached Ireland. 'From the highest to the lowest,' they declare, 'it is universally read, from the cabinet council to the nursery. . . . It has passed Lords and Commons *nemine contradicente*, and the whole town, men, women, and children, are quite full of it.' A book which attained in the author's lifetime a wellnigh unprecedented popularity should have

[1] *Life of Swift*, p. 299.

yielded him a large profit. What it did yield we do not know, but in a letter dated 1735, in which, perhaps, he alludes to the *Travels*, Swift says, 'I never got a farthing for anything I writ, except once, about eight years ago, and that by Mr. Pope's prudent management for me.'

The injustice done to Ireland in the last century, as short-sighted as it was cruel, is described at large in the second volume of Mr. Lecky's *History*. Swift, who hated Ireland, felt a righteous indignation at the misgovernment which threatened the country with ruin, and some of his most powerful phillipics were secretly written in her defence.

In 1720 he issued a pamphlet urging the Irish to use only Irish manufactures: 'I heard the late Archbishop of Tuam,' he writes, 'mention a pleasant observation of somebody's, that Ireland would never be happy till a law were made for burning everything that came from England, except their people and their coals. I must confess, that as to the former, I should not be sorry if they would stay at home; and for the latter, I hope, in a little time we shall have no occasion for them

"Non tanti mitra est, non tanti judicis ostrum—"

but I should rejoice to see a staylace from England be thought scandalous, and become a topic for censure at visits and tea-tables.'

The pamphlet is a forcible attack on the oppression under which Ireland laboured, and the Government answered it by prosecuting the printer. Nine times the jury were sent back by the Chief Justice before they consented to bring in a 'special verdict,' and ultimately the prosecution was dropped.

Two years later the English Government granted a patent to a man of the name of Wood to issue a new

copper coinage for Ireland to an extravagant amount, out of which, in return for bribes to the Duchess of Kendal, it was supposed that the speculator would make a considerable profit at Ireland's expense. The country was aroused, and Swift, by the issue of the *Drapier's Letters*, purporting to come from a Dublin draper, roused the passions of the people to a white heat. It was known perfectly well from whom the *Letters* came, but no one would betray Swift, and when the printer was thrown into prison the jury refused to convict. The battle was fought with vigour, Swift conquered, and the patent was withdrawn. A brief passage from the fourth and final letter 'To the Whole People of Ireland' shall be quoted. It will be seen that the writer is not afraid of plain speaking. After saying that the king cannot compel the subject to take any money except it be sterling gold or silver, he adds:

'Now here you may see that the vile accusation of Wood and his accomplices, charging us with disputing the King's prerogative by refusing his brass, can have no place —because compelling the subject to take any coin which is not sterling is no part of the King's prerogative, and I am very confident, if it were so, we should be the last of his people to dispute it, as well from that inviolable loyalty we have always paid to his Majesty, as from the treatment we might in such a case justly expect from some, who seem to think we have neither common sense nor common senses. But, God be thanked, the best of them are only our fellow-subjects, and not our masters. One great merit I am sure we have which those of English birth can have no pretence to—that our ancestors reduced this kingdom to the obedience of England; for which we have been rewarded with a worse climate—the privilege of being governed by laws to which we do not consent—a ruined trade—a House of Peers without jurisdiction—almost an incapacity for all

employments—and the dread of Wood's halfpence. But we are so far from disputing the king's prerogative in coining, that we own he has power to give a patent to any man for setting his royal image and superscription upon whatever materials he pleases, and liberty to the patentee to offer them in any country from England to Japan; only attended with one small limitation—that nobody alive is obliged to take them.'

With much humour, in the last paragraph of the letter, Swift undertakes to show that Walpole is against Wood's project 'by this one invincible argument, that he has the universal opinion of being a wise man, an able minister, and in all his proceedings pursuing the true interest of the King his master; and that as his integrity is above all corruption, so is his fortune above all temptation.'

Swift's arguments in the *Drapier's Letters* are sophistical, his statements grossly exaggerated, and his advice sometimes shameless, as, for instance, in recommending what is now but too well known as 'boycotting.' The end, however, was gained, and the Dean was treated with the honours of a conqueror. On his return from England in 1726, a guard of honour conducted him through the streets, and the city bells sounded a joyful peal. Wherever he went he was received with something like royal honours, and when Walpole talked of arresting him, he was told that 10,000 soldiers would be needed to make the attempt successful. The Dean's hatred of oppression and injustice had its limits. He defended the Test Act, and assailed all dissenters with ungovernable fury. It was his aim to exclude them from every kind of power.

In 1729, with a passion outwardly calm and in a moderate style, which makes his amazing satire the more appalling, Swift published *A Modest Proposal for Prevent-*

ing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from being a Burden to their Parents or Country and for making them Beneficial to the Public. A more hideous piece of irony was never written; it is the fruit of an indignation that tore his heart. The *Proposal* is, that considering the great misery of Ireland, young children should be used for food. 'I grant,' he says, 'this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.' A very worthy person, he says, considers that young lads and maidens over twelve would supply the want of venison, but 'it is not improbable that some scrupulous people might be apt to censure such a practice (although, indeed, very unjustly), as a little bordering upon cruelty; which I confess has always been with me the strongest objection against any project, how well soever intended.' The business-like way in which the argument is conducted throughout, adds greatly to its force. Swift has written nothing so terrible as this satire, and nothing that surpasses it in power.

The Dean was fretting away his life when he wrote this pamphlet. Two years before he had paid his last visit to the country where, as he said in a letter to Gay, he had made his friendships and left his desires. On the death of George I. he visited England, vainly hoping to gain some preferment there through the aid of Mrs. Howard, the mistress of George II., and returned to 'wretched Dublin,' to lose the woman he had loved so well and treated so strangely, and to 'die in a rage like a poisoned rat in a hole.' After Stella's death, in 1728, Swift's burden of misanthropy was never destined to be lightened. His rage and gloom increased as the years moved on, and in penning his lines of savage invective against the Irish House of Commons, the Dean had a fit

and wrote no more verse. Here is a specimen of his *saeva indignatio*:

> 'Could I from the building's top
> Hear the rattling thunder drop,
> While the devil upon the roof
> (If the devil be thunder-proof)
> Should with poker fiery red
> Crack the stones and melt the lead;
> Drive them down on every skull,
> While the den of thieves is full;
> Quite destroy that harpies' nest,
> How might then our isle be blest!'

It should be observed at the same time that even in his declining days, when his heart was heavy with bitterness, Swift indulged in practical jokes and in the most trivial pursuits. *Vive la bagatelle* was his cry, but it was the cry of a man who had as deep a contempt for the wiser pursuits of life as for its frivolities. Of the mirth that is the natural outcome of a cheerful nature, the Dean knew nothing. His hilarity was but a vain attempt to escape from despair. In 1740 he writes of being very miserable, extremely deaf, and full of pain. Sometimes he gave way to furious bursts of temper, and for several years before the end came, he fell into a state resembling idiocy. Swift died on October 19th, 1745, leaving his money to a hospital for lunatics,

> 'And showed by one satiric touch
> No nation needed it so much.'

A brilliant writer, who has undertaken to prove the 'glaring injustice' of the popular estimate of Swift, and by his forcible epithets has strengthened the grounds on which that estimate is built, observes that Swift's 'philosophy of life is ignoble, base, and false,' that 'his impious mockery extends even to the Deity,' and that 'a large portion of his

works exhibit, and in intense activity, all the worst attributes of our nature—revenge, spite, malignity, uncleanness.'[1]

This harsh judgment is essentially a true one; but Swift's was a many-sided character. He was a misanthrope, with deep, though very limited affections, a man frugal to eccentricity, with a benevolence at once active and extensive. His powerful intellect compels our admiration, if not our sympathy. His irony, his genius for satire and humour, his argumentative skill, his language, which is never wanting in strength, and is as clear as the most pellucid of mountain streams—these gifts are of so rare an order, that Swift's place in the literary history of his age must be always one of high eminence. Doubtless, as a master of style, he has been sometimes over-praised. If we regard the writer's end, it must be admitted that his language is admirably fitted for that end. What more then, it may be asked, can be needed? The reply is, that in composition, as in other things, there are different orders of excellence. The kind, although perfect, may be a low kind, and Swift's style wants the 'sweetness and light,' to quote a phrase of his own, which distinguish our greatest prose writers. It lacks also the elevation which inspires, and the persuasiveness that convinces while it charms. With infinitely more vigour than Addison, Swift, apart from his *Letters*, has none of Addison's attractiveness. No style, perhaps, is better fitted to exhibit scorn and contempt; but its author cannot express, because he does not possess, the sense of beauty.

Unlike Pope, Swift was a man of affairs rather than of letters. He wrote neither for literary fame nor for money. His ambition was to be a ruler of men, and in

[1] *Jonathan Swift, a Biographical and Critical Study*, by J. Churton Collins, p. 267.

imperious will he was strong enough to make a second Strafford. 'When people ask me,' said Lord Carteret, 'how I governed Ireland, I say that I pleased Dr. Swift, "*quæsitum meritis sume superbiam.*"' As a political pamphleteer he succeeded, because he was savagely in earnest, and had the special genius of a combatant. If argument was against him he used satire; if satire failed he tried invective: his armoury was full of weapons, and there was not one of them he could not wield. He loved power, and exercised it on the ministers who needed the services of his pen. And, as we have already said, he dispensed his favours like a king! Swift's commanding genius gives even to his most trivial productions a measure of vitality. The student of our eighteenth century literature is arrested by the man and his works, and to treat either him or them with indifference would be to neglect a significant chapter in the history of the time.

John Arbuthnot (1667-1735).

John Arbuthnot, one of the most prominent of the Queen Anne wits, and the warm friend of Swift and Pope, was born at Arbuthnot, near Montrose, in 1667. He studied medicine at Aberdeen, and having taken his doctor's degree at St. Andrews, came, after the wont of ambitious Scotchmen, to seek his fortune in London, where in 1700 he published an *Essay on the Usefulness of Mathematical Learning*, and having won high reputation as a man of science, was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. A few years later he was made Physician Extraordinary to Queen Anne; and it was not long before he had as high a repute among men of letters as with men of science. He suffered frequently from illness; but no pain, it has been said, could extinguish his gaiety of mind. In the last century Hampstead was a favourite resort of invalids. Arbuthnot had

sent Gay there on one occasion, and thither in 1734 he went himself, so ill that he 'could neither sleep, breathe, eat, nor move.' Contrary to his expectation he regained a little strength, and lived until the following spring. 'Pope and I were with him,' Lord Chesterfield wrote, 'the evening before he died, when he suffered racking pains. . . . He took leave of us with tenderness, without weakness, and told us that he died not only with the comfort, but even the devout assurance of a Christian.'

There is not one of Pope's circle who holds a more enviable position than Arbuthnot. In strength of intellect and readiness of wit Swift only was his equal, and in classical learning he was Swift's superior. Like Othello, Arbuthnot was of a free and open nature, and his friends clung to him with an affection that was almost womanly. He had the fine impulses of Goldsmith combined with the manliness and practical sagacity of Dr. Johnson. And Johnson recognized in this celebrated physician a kindred spirit. 'I think Dr. Arbuthnot,' he said, 'the first man among the wits of the age. He was the most universal genius, being an excellent physician, a man of deep learning, and a man of much humour.' His genius and generous qualities were amply acknowledged by his contemporaries. Pope calls Arbuthnot 'as good a doctor as any man for one that is ill, and a better doctor for one that is well;' Swift said he had every virtue which could make a man amiable; Berkeley wrote of him as a great philosopher who was reckoned the first mathematician of the age and had the character 'of uncommon virtue and probity,' and Chesterfield, who declared that his knowledge and 'almost inexhaustible imagination' were at every one's service, added that 'charity, benevolence, and a love of mankind appeared unaffectedly in all he said and did.'

Strange to say we know little of Arbuthnot but what is

to be gleaned from the correspondence of his friends, and it is only of late years that an attempt has been made to write the doctor's biography, and to collect his works.[1] To edit these works satisfactorily is a difficult and a doubtful task—several of Arbuthnot's writings having been produced in connection with Swift, Pope, and Gay. So indifferent was he to literary fame, that his children are said to have made kites of papers in which he had jotted down hints that would have furnished good matter for folios. His most famous work is *The History of John Bull* (1713), which Macaulay considered the most humorous political satire in the language. It was designed to help the Tory party at the expense of the Duke of Marlborough, whose genius as a military leader was probably equal to that of Wellington, while he fell far below the 'Great Duke' in the virtues which form a noble character. The irony and dry humour of the satire remind one of Swift, and, like Arbuthnot's *Art of Political Lying*, is so much in Swift's vein throughout that M. Taine may be excused for attributing both of these pieces to the Dean of St. Patrick's.

The *History of John Bull* is not fitted to attain lasting popularity. It will be read from curiosity and for information; but the keen excitement, the amusement, and the irritation caused by a brilliant satire of living men and passing events can be but vaguely imagined by readers whose interest in the statecraft of the age is historical and not personal. Arbuthnot, like Swift, belonged to the Tory camp, and both did their utmost to depreciate the great General who never knew defeat, and to promote the designs of Harley. When Arbuthnot produced his satire, all the town laughed at the representation

[1] See *The Life and Works of Dr. Arbuthnot*, by George A. Aitken. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

of Marlborough as an old smooth-tongued attorney who loved money, and was said by his neighbours to be henpecked, 'which was impossible by such a mild-spirited woman as his wife was.' That an 'honest plain-dealing fellow' like John Bull the Clothier, should be deceived by such wily men of business as Lewis Baboon of France, and Lord Strutt of Spain, and also that other tradesmen should be willing to join John and Nic Frog, the linen-draper of Holland, in the lawsuit, provided that Bull and Frog, or Bull alone, would bear the law charges, is made to appear likely enough; and Scott says truly that 'it was scarce possible so effectually to dim the lustre of Marlborough's splendid achievements as by parodying them under the history of a suit conducted by a wily attorney who made every advantage gained over the defendant a reason for protracting law procedure, and enhancing the expense of his client.' In this long lawsuit everybody is represented as gaining something except *John Bull*, whose ready money, book debts, bonds, and mortgages go into the lawyer's pockets. Whether the nickname of *John Bull* originated with Arbuthnot or was merely adopted by him is not known.

Arbuthnot was an active member of the Scriblerus Club, and wrote the larger portion of the *Memoirs of Martin Scriblerus* (1741), the design of which was, as Pope said, to ridicule false tastes in learning, in the character of a man 'that had dipped into every art and science, but injudiciously in each.' Dr. Johnson says of this work that no man can be wiser, better, or merrier for remembering it. Perhaps he is right; but the *Memoirs* contain some humorous points which, if they do not create merriment, may yield some slight amusement. The pedant's endeavours to make a philosopher of his child are sufficiently ludicrous. He is delighted to find that the infant has the wart of Cicero

and the very neck of Alexander, and hopes that he may come to stammer like Demosthenes, 'and in time arrive at many other defects of famous men.' As the boy grows up his father invents for him a geographical suit of clothes, and stamps his gingerbread with the letters of the Greek alphabet, which proved so successful a mode of teaching the language, that on the very first day the child 'ate as far as iota.' He also taught him as a diversion 'an odd and secret manner of stealing, according to the custom of the Lacedemonians, wherein he succeeded so well that he practised it till the day of his death.' Martin studies logic, philosophy, and medicine, and discovers that the seat of the soul is not confined to one place in all persons, but resides in the stomach of epicures, in the brain of philosophers, in the fingers of fiddlers, and in the toes of rope-dancers. His discoveries, it may be added, are made 'without the trivial help of experiments or observations.'

CHAPTER VI.

DANIEL DEFOE—JOHN DENNIS—COLLEY CIBBER—LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU—EARL OF CHESTERFIELD—LORD LYTTELTON—JOSEPH SPENCE.

Daniel Defoe (1661 1731).

THE most voluminous writer of his century is popularly remembered as the author of one book, published in his old age. Everybody has read *Robinson Crusoe*, and knows the name of its author; but few readers outside the narrow circle of literary students are aware of Defoe's exhaustless labours as a politician, social reformer, projector, pamphleteer, and novelist.

It would be well for the author's reputation if we knew less about him than we do. There was a time when he was regarded as a noble sufferer in the cause of civil and religious liberty. His faults were credited to his age while his virtues were supposed to place him on an eminence far above the time-servers who despised him. He has been praised as a man courageously living for great aims, who was maligned by the malice of party, and to whose memory scant justice has been done. 'No one,' says Henry Kingsley, 'could come up to the standard of his absolute precision,' and his 'inexorable honesty alienated everyone.' These words were written in 1868. Four years previously, however, the discovery of six letters in the State Paper Office, in Defoe's own hand, had entirely destroyed his character

for inexorable honesty, and the researches of his latest and most exhaustive biographer,[1] who regards his hero's vices as virtues, do but serve to give greater prominence to the baseness of his conduct. Defoe, by his own confession, was for many years in the pay of the Government for secret services, taking shares in Tory papers and supervising them as editor, in order to defeat the aims of the party to which he professed to be allied, and of the proprietors with whom he was in partnership. Thus in 1718, he writes as a plea that his labours should be remembered: 'I am, Sir, for this service, posted among Papists, Jacobites, and enraged High Tories—a generation who I profess my very soul abhors; I am obliged to hear traitorous expressions and outrageous words against his majesty's person and government, and his most faithful servants, and smile at it all as if I approved it; I am obliged to take all the scandalous and indeed villainous papers that come, and keep them by me as if I would gather materials from them to put them into the *News;* nay, I often venture to let things pass which are a little shocking that I may not render myself suspected. Thus I bow in the House of *Rimmon,* and must humbly recommend myself to his lordship's protection, or I may be undone the sooner, by how much the more faithfully I execute the commands I am under.' It would not be fair to judge Defoe altogether by the moral standard of our own day, but the part he played as a servant and spy of the government would have been an act of baseness in any age, and of this he seems to have been conscious.

Daniel Foe, who about 1703 assumed the prefix of De, for no assignable reason, was the son of a butcher and Nonconformist in Cripplegate, who had the youth educated

[1] *Daniel Defoe: his Life and recently discovered Writings, extending from* 1716 *to* 1729. By William Lee. 3 vols.

for the ministry. Daniel, however, preferred a more exciting occupation, and took part in the unfortunate expedition of the Duke of Monmouth. Escaping from that peril he began business as a hose factor in Cornhill, and carried it on until he failed about the year 1692. Already he had learnt to use the pen, and a loyal pamphlet secured for him a public appointment which lasted for some years. He was also connected with a brick manufactory at Tilbury. Meanwhile he wrote for the press, and showed himself the possessor of a clear and masculine style, which could be 'understanded of the people.'

In 1698 Defoe published his *Essay on Projects*, 'which perhaps,' Benjamin Franklin says, 'gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life.'

One of the most interesting projects in the book is the proposal to form an Academy on the French model. In 1712 Swift wrote a pamphlet (the only piece he published with his name) entitled *A proposal for correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English tongue*, in which he suggests the foundation of an Academy under the protection of the Queen and her ministers. The idea it will be seen had been anticipated fifteen years before.

'The peculiar study of the Academy of France,' Defoe writes, 'has been to refine and correct their own language, which they have done to that happy degree that we see it now spoken in all the courts of Christendom as the language allowed to be most universal. I had the honour once to be a member of a small society who seemed to offer at this noble design in England; but the greatness of the work and the modesty of the gentlemen concerned prevailed with them to desist from an enterprise which appeared too great for private hands to undertake. We want indeed a Richelieu to commence such a work, for I am persuaded were there such a genius in our kingdom to lead the way, there would

not want capacities who could carry on the work to a glory equal to all that has gone before them. The English tongue is a subject not at all less worthy the labours of such a society than the French, and capable of a much greater perfection. The learned among the French will own that the comprehensiveness of expression is a glory in which the English tongue not only equals, but excels its neighbours. . . . It is a great pity that a subject so noble should not have some as noble to attempt it; and for a method what greater can be set before us than the Academy of Paris, which, to give the French their due, stands foremost among all the great attempts in the learned part of the world.'

Defoe also projected a Royal Military Academy, and an academy for women which should have only one entrance and a large moat round it. With these precautions, spies, he observes, would be unnecessary, since, in his opinion, 'there needs no other care to prevent intriguing than to keep the men effectually away.' He had the Eastern notion of guarding women from danger by preventing the access to it, yet he could write:

'A woman of sense and manners is the finest and most delicate part of God's creation; the glory of her Maker, and the great instance of His singular regard to man, His darling creature, to whom He gave the best gift either God could bestow or man receive. And it is the sordidest piece of folly and ingratitude in the world to withhold from the sex the due lustre which the advantages of education gives to the natural beauty of their minds. A woman well bred and well taught, furnished with the additional accomplishments of knowledge and behaviour, is a creature without comparison; her society is the emblem of sublime enjoyments; her person is angelic and her conversation heavenly. . . . She is every way suitable to the sublimest wish, and the man that has such a one to his portion has nothing to do but to rejoice in her and be thankful.'

In verse Defoe published the *True Born Englishman* (1701), in defence of King William and his Dutch followers:

> 'William's the name that's spoke by every tongue,
> William's the darling subject of my song;
> Listen, ye virgins, to the charming sound,
> And in eternal dances hand it round.
> Your early offerings to this altar bring,
> Make him at once a lover and a king.'

The nonsense deepens as the rhyme goes on. For William every tender vow is to be made, he is to be the first thought in the morning, and his name will act as a charm, affrighting the infernal powers and guarding from the terror of the night.

The poem proved very popular, and Defoe writes that had he been able to enjoy the profit of his own labour he would have gained above £1,000. He printed nine editions at the price of one shilling a copy, but meanwhile twelve surreptitious editions were published and sold for a few pence, a fraud for which he says he had no remedy but patience. Throughout his busy life of authorship he was indeed continually victimized by pirates.

While in verse Defoe extolled the king as if he were a demi-god, he did William good service by his pamphlets, and was in some degree admitted into his confidence.

Up to the king's death in 1702 his course appears to have been straightforward; after the accession of Anne he acted a less honourable part. No fault can be found with his design that year in writing *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, a piece of irony unsurpassed in that age until the publication of Swift's *Modest Proposal*, twenty-seven years later. The satire was at first accepted as a serious argument. The Dissenters were alarmed, and the most

bigoted of High Churchmen delighted. Then, Defoe's aim being discovered, both parties joined in the cry for vengeance. He was condemned to stand for three days in the pillory, and was afterwards imprisoned in Newgate. To the 'hieroglyphic state machine, contrived to punish Fancy in,' the undaunted man addressed a hymn which was hawked about the streets, and the mob instead of pelting him with offensive missiles, covered him with flowers. 'Earless on high stood unabashed Defoe,' says Pope. He was unabashed, but he was not earless.

In Newgate he remained until 1704, when he was released by Harley. In prison he wrote a minutely circumstantial account of the great storm commemorated in Addison's *Campaign*. How much of Defoe's narrative is truth and how much invention it is impossible to say. The fact that he solemnly vouches for the accuracy of his statements inclines one to believe that they are not to be trusted, for this was always Defoe's *rôle* as a writer of fiction. His first and most deliberate effort is to impose upon his readers, and in this art he is without a rival.

While in Newgate he began his *Review*, a political journal of great ability. The first number was published in February, 1704, and it existed, though not in its original form, for more than nine years.

'When it is remembered that no other pen was ever employed than that of Defoe, upon a work appearing at such frequent intervals, extending over more than nine years, and embracing, in more than five thousand printed pages, essays on almost every branch of human knowledge, the achievement must be pronounced a great one, even if he had written nothing else. If we add that between the dates of the first and last numbers of the *Review* he wrote and published no less than eighty other distinct works, containing 4,727 pages, and perhaps more not now known,

the fertility of his genius must appear as astonishing as the greatness of his capacity for labour.'[1]

Defoe was permitted to leave his prison upon condition that he should act in the secret service of the Government, and his work was that of an hireling writer unburdened by principle. When Harley was ejected he made himself useful to Godolphin; when Godolphin was dismissed he went back to Harley, and 'the spirit of the *Review* changed abruptly.' A more useful man for the work he had undertaken could not be found. His dexterity, his boldness, his knowledge of men and of affairs, his readiness as a writer, and it must be added his unscrupulousness, fitted him admirably for services which had to be done in secret.

Much that he did openly was deserving of high praise. He was tolerant in an intolerant age, he did his best to forward the Union of England and Scotland, his patriotic spirit was not feigned, his words are often weighty with wisdom, and it has been truly said, that 'his powerful advocacy was enlisted in favour of almost every practicable scheme of social improvement that came to the front in his time.'[2]

With equal truth the writer adds that Defoe was 'a wonderful mixture of knave and patriot.' The knavery is seen to some extent in his method of workmanship as a man of letters. In *A True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal the next day after her Death to one Mrs. Bar-*

[1] Lee's *Defoe*, vol. i., p. 85. Of Defoe's fertility and capacity for work there cannot be a question; but the biographer's stupendous catalogue of his publications—254 in number—contains many which are ascribed to him solely on what Mr. Lee regards as internal evidence.

[2] *English Men of Letters—Daniel Defoe.* By William Minto. P. 170.

[3] See note on page 248.

grave at Canterbury, 8th September, 1705 (1706) Defoe's art of mystification is skilfully practised.

'This relation,' he says in the Preface, 'is matter of fact, and attended with such circumstances as may induce any reasonable man to believe it. It was sent by a gentleman, a Justice of Peace at Maidstone, in Kent, and a very intelligent person, to his friend in London as it is here worded; which discourse is here attested by a very sober and understanding gentleman, who had it from his kinswoman who lives in Canterbury, within a few doors of the house in which the within-named Mrs. Bargrave lives . . . . and who positively assured him that the whole matter as it is related and laid down is really true, and what she herself had in the same words, as near as may be, from Mrs. Bargrave's own mouth.'

In addition to this circumstantial statement, the veritable appearance of the ghostly lady is confirmed by the fact that she wore a scoured silk gown, newly made up, which, as Mrs. Bargrave told a friend, she felt and commended. 'Then Mrs. Watson cried out, "you have seen her indeed, for none knew but Mrs. Veal and myself that the gown was scoured."' The ghost came chiefly for the purpose of recommending Drelincourt's volume, *A Christian's Defence Against the Fear of Death*, then in its third edition. The fourth edition contained Mrs. Bargrave's story. 'I am unable to say,' Mr. Lee writes, 'when Defoe's "Apparition" became a necessary appendage to the book; but think, that since the eleventh edition, to the present time, Drelincourt has never been published without it.'

When in 1719, at the age of fifty-nine, he produced his first and greatest work of fiction, *Robinson Crusoe*, he aimed by the constant reiteration of commonplace details to give a matter-of-fact aspect to the narrative, and in most of his later novels, with the exception of *Colonel Jack* (1722),

which he allows to be in part a 'moral romance,' Defoe boldly maintains that his relations are in every respect true to biography and to history. To make this more probable he overloads his pages with a number of business-like statements, and with affairs so insignificant and sordid that only his genius can save the narrative from being wearisome. To inculcate morality he carries his readers into the worst dens of vice—his heroes being pickpockets, pirates, and convicts, and his heroines depraved women of the lowest order. The interest felt in *Captain Singleton* (1720), in *Moll Flanders* (1722), in *Colonel Jack* (1722), and in *Roxana* (1724), is to be found in the minute record of their shameless adventures, their miseries and vices. When the characters reform, Defoe's occupation is gone. The atmosphere the reader is forced to breathe in these tales is indeed so oppressive that he will be glad to escape from it into the pure and exhilarating air of a Shakespeare or a Scott.

A critic has asserted that as models of fictitious narrative these tales are supreme, but it is impossible to agree with this judgment. The highest imaginative art is not deceptive art. The fact that Lord Chatham thought the *Memoirs of a Cavalier*[1] (1720) a true history, is not to the credit of the work as fiction. As well, it has been said, might you claim the highest genius for the painter, whose fruit and flowers were so deceptively painted as to tempt birds to peck at the canvas.

[1] There can be no doubt, I think, despite Mr. Lee's arguments, that the work is as much a fiction as any other historical novel. That it may be based upon some authentic document is highly probable, although it is not necessary to agree with his biographer, that 'to claim for Defoe the authorship of the *Cavalier*, as a work of pure fiction, would be equivalent to a claim of almost superhuman genius."

Whatever interest the reader feels in Defoe's 'secondary novels,' of which *Roxana* is the most powerful, is due to scenes which disgust as much as they impress. The vividness with which they are depicted is undeniable, but one does not desire to inspect filth with a microscope. Happily *Robinson Crusoe*, on which the author's fame rests, is a thoroughly healthy book that still holds its place as the best, or one of the best, volumes ever written for boys. There is genius as well as extraordinary skill in the way this admirable story is told, but it is not among the fictions which are read with as much pleasure in old age as in youth. Defoe's amazing gift of invention does not compensate for the want of a creative and elevating imagination.

The *History of the Plague in London* (1722) stands next to *Robinson Crusoe* in literary merit. Had Defoe been a witness, as he pretends to have been, of the scenes which he describes, the record could not be more vivid. It professes to have been 'written by a citizen who continued all the while in London,' and 'lived without Aldgate Church and Whitechapel Bars, on the left hand or north side of the street.' In this case, as in others, the circumstantial character of the narrative led readers to regard it as a true history, and Dr. Mead, in his *Discourse on the Plague* (1744), quotes the book as an authority.

Highly characteristic of Defoe's style, and of his art as a moralist is the *Religious Courtship*, also published in 1722. It is the fictitious history of a family told partly in dialogue, and so written as to attract the reader in spite of repetitions and of reflections as praiseworthy as they are commonplace. It appeals to a class whose attention would not be won by fine literature, and has not appealed in vain, for the book, after passing through a large number of editions, has not yet lost its popularity. Morally the work is unobjectionable, though not a little narrow, and it is

strange that it should have appeared about the same time as a story so offensively coarse as *Moll Flanders*.

The most veracious book written by Defoe is *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain, By a Gentleman*, 1724, in three volumes. The full title of the work is too long to quote, but it may be observed that the promises it holds out under five headings are satisfactorily fulfilled. The *Tour* bears the marks of having been written with great care and from personal observation throughout. Defoe states that before publishing the book he had made seventeen large circuits or separate journeys, and three general tours through the whole island. It contains curious information as to the state of England and Scotland one hundred and seventy years ago, and readers interested in our social progress and the industrial life of the country will find much to interest them in the traveller's shrewd observations and careful details. The love of mountain and lake scenery felt by Gray more than forty years later was a passion unknown to Defoe and to most of his contemporaries. In the *Tour* Westmoreland is described as the wildest, most barbarous and frightful country of any which the author had passed over. He observes that it is 'of no advantage to represent horror,' and the impassable hills with their snow-covered tops 'seemed,' he says, 'to tell us all the pleasant part of England was at an end.' The *Tour* exhibits Defoe's literary gift of expressing what he has to say in the clearest language. A homely style which fulfils its purpose has a merit deserving of recognition. For steady work upon the road the sober hackney is of more service than the race-horse.

Defoe was a husband and father and a man of affairs, yet, like his own Crusoe, he lived a lonely life, and in 1731, owing to some strange circumstance of which there is no

record, died a lonely death at a lodging-house at Moorfields. He has been called the father of the English novel, and deserves the title, although on a slighter scale Steele and Addison preceded him as writers of fiction. As a novelist he is without refinement, without ideality, without passion; he looks at life from a low level, but in the narrow territory of which he is master—the art of realistic invention—his power of insight is incontestible. Defoe adopted a method dear in our day to some of the least worthy of French novelists, who while aiming to copy Nature debase her. For Nature must be interpreted by Art, since only thus can we obtain a likeness that shall be both beautiful and true. Defoe, nevertheless, has contributed one book of lasting value to the literature of his country, and such a gift, in the eyes of the literary chronicler, hides a multitude of faults.

John Dennis (1657-1733-4).

John Dennis was born in London and educated at Harrow and Caius College, Cambridge. His relations with Pope give him a more prominent position among men of letters than he would otherwise deserve, and mark with unpleasing distinctness the coarse methods of literary warfare adopted in Pope's day. The poet began the attack in his *Essay on Criticism*. Dennis had written a tragedy called *Appius and Virginia*, and Pope, who had a grudge against him for not admiring his *Pastorals*, showed his spite in the following lines:

> 'But Appius reddens at each word you speak,
> And stares tremendous, with a threatening eye,
> Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry.'

It was perilous in Pope to allude to the personal defects of an antagonist, and Dennis attacked him coarsely in return as a 'young, squab, short gentleman, an eternal writer of amorous pastoral madrigals, and the very bow of

the god of Love.' 'He has reason,' he adds, 'to thank the good gods that he was born a modern; for had he been born of Grecian parents, and his father by consequence had by law the absolute disposal of him, his life had been no longer than one of his poems—the life of half a day.'

Dennis's pamphlet on the *Essay* caused Pope some pain when he heard of it. 'But it was quite over,' he told Spence, 'as soon as I came to look into his book and found he was in such a passion.'

The critic, however, was a thorn in Pope's flesh for many a year, and the poet showed his irritation by assaulting him in prose and verse. Dennis was equally ready, although not equally capable of returning the poet's blows, and when free from the impotence of anger, made several shrewd critical thrusts which his antagonist felt keenly.

Dennis aspired to be a poet and dramatist. He wrote a bombastic poem in blank verse called *The Monument*, sacred to the immortal memory of 'the good, the great, the god-like, William III.'; a poem, also in blank verse, and still more 'tremendous,' to quote his favourite word, on the *Battle of Blenheim*, in which he frequently invokes his soul to say and sing a thousand things far beyond his soul's reach—and a poem equally laboured and grandiloquent, on the Battle of Ramillies, in which there are passages that read like a burlesque of Milton. Dennis observes in his *Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704) that 'poetry unless it pleases, nay, and pleases to a height, is the most contemptible thing in the world.' This is just criticism, but the writer did not recognize that his own verse was contemptible. In this essay, which contains many sound critical remarks and an appreciation of Milton seldom felt at that time, he has the bad taste to quote as an illustration of the sublime, a passage from his own paraphrase of the Te Deum:

'Where'er at utmost stretch we cast our eyes
Through the vast frightful spaces of the skies,
Ev'n there we find Thy glory, there we gaze
On Thy bright Majesty's unbounded blaze;
Ten thousand suns prodigious globes of light
At once in broad dimensions strike our sight;
Millions behind, in the remoter skies,
Appear but spangles to our wearied eyes;
And when our wearied eyes want farther strength
To pierce the void's immeasurable length
Our vigorous towering thoughts still further fly,
And still remoter flaming worlds descry;
But even an Angel's comprehensive thought
Cannot extend so far as Thou hast wrought;
Our vast conceptions are by swelling, brought,
Swallowed and lost in Infinite, to nought.'

It is significant of Dennis's judgment of his own verse that these inflated lines follow one of the loveliest passages contained in *Paradise Lost*. Milton describes the moon unveiling her peerless light; and the poet-critic exhibits in juxtaposition his 'vigorous towering thoughts' about the stars. The comparison forced upon the reader is unfortunate.

His tragedies, *Iphigenia* (1704), *Liberty Asserted* (1704), *Appius and Virginia* (1709), and a comedy called *A Plot and No Plot* (1697) were brought upon the stage. *Liberty Asserted*, which was received with applause due to the violence of its attacks upon the French, although called a tragedy, does not end tragically. The heroine's patriotism is so fervid that she professes herself willing, while loving one man, to marry another whom she does not love, if her country deems him the more worthy.

Among other poetical attempts, Dennis addressed a Pindaric Ode to Dryden, and the great poet, with the flattery which he was always ready to lavish on his well-wishers, called him 'one of the greatest masters' in that

kind of verse. 'You have the sublimity of sense as well as sound,' he wrote, 'and know how far the boldness of a poet may lawfully extend.'

It may be added that Dennis on one occasion successfully opposed one of the ablest controversialists of the age. In *The Absolute Unlawfulness of Stage Entertainments fully demonstrated*, William Law attacked dramatic representations, not on account of the evils at that time associated with them, but as 'in their own nature grossly sinful.' 'To suppose an innocent play,' Law says, 'is like supposing innocent lust, sober rant, or harmless profaneness,' and throughout the pamphlet this strain of fierce hostility is maintained.

'Law,' says his biographer, 'measured his strength with some of the very ablest men of his day, with men like Hoadly and Warburton, and Tindal and Wesley; and it may safely be said that he never came forth from the contest defeated. But, absurd as it may sound, it is perfectly true that what neither Hoadly nor Warburton, nor Tindal, nor Wesley could do, was done by John Dennis. . . . "Plays," wrote Law, "are contrary to Scripture as the devil is to God, as the worship of images is to the second commandment." To this Dennis gave the obvious and unanswerable retort that "when St. Paul was at Athens, the very source of dramatic poetry, he said a great deal publicly against the idolatry of the Athenians, but not one word against their stage. At Corinth he said as little against theirs. He quoted on one occasion an Athenian dramatic poet, and on others Aratus and Epimenides. He was educated in all the learning of the Grecians, and could not but have read their dramatic poems; and yet, so far from speaking a word against them, he makes use of them for the instruction and conversion of mankind."'

Dennis's pamphlet, *The Stage defended from Scripture*,

Reason, Experience, and the Common Sense of Mankind for Two Thousand Years, was published in 1726. In his latter days he suffered from two grievous calamities, poverty and blindness. In 1733 Vanbrugh's play, *The Provoked Husband*, was acted for his benefit, and his old enemy Pope wrote the prologue, of which the sarcasm is more conspicuous than the kindness. There is a story, to which allusion is made in the *Dunciad*, that Dennis had invented some kind of theatrical thunder, and how, being once present at a tragedy, he fell into a great passion because his art had been appropriated, and cried out 'Sdeath! that is *my* thunder.' The critic was also known to have an intense hatred of the French and of the Pope, and these peculiarities are not forgotten in the prologue.

After saying that Dennis lay pressed by want and weakness, his doubtful friend adds:

> 'How changed from him who made the boxes groan,
> And shook the stage with thunders all his own!
> Stood up to dash each vain Pretender's hope,
> Maul the French tyrant, or pull down the Pope!
> If there's a Briton then, true bred and born,
> Who holds Dragoons and wooden shoes in scorn;
> If there's a critic of distinguished rage;
> If there's a senior who contemns this age;
> Let him to-night his just assistance lend,
> And be the Critic's, Briton's, Old Man's friend.

Dennis got £100 by this benefit, but had little time in which to spend it, for he died about a fortnight afterwards at the age of seventy-seven. Upon his death Aaron Hill wrote some memorial verses, in which he prophesies that, while the critic's frailties will be no longer remembered,

> 'The rising ages shall redeem his name,
> And nations read him into lasting fame.'

It will be seen that the poets did not all treat Dennis

unkindly. If praise were substantial food, he would have had enough to sustain him from 'glorious John' alone.

Colley Cibber (1671-1757).

Colley Cibber holds a more prominent place than Dennis in the list of men whom Pope selected for attack. He could not have chosen one more impervious to assault. The poet's anger excited Cibber's mirth, his satire contributed to his content. The comedian's unbounded self-satisfaction and good humour, his vivacity and spirits, were proof against Pope's malice. Graceless he may have been, but a dullard the mercurial 'King Colley' was not.

Born in 1671, he disappointed the hopes of his father, the famous sculptor, and at the age of eighteen made his first appearance on the stage. As actor and as dramatist, the theatre throughout his life was Cibber's all-absorbing interest. His first play, *Love's Last Shift* (1696), kept possession of the stage for forty years, and his best play, *The Careless Husband* (1704), received a like welcome. As an actor he was also successful, and played for £50 a night, the highest sum ever given at that time to any English player. His career was as long as it was prosperous. 'Old Cibber plays to-night,' Horace Walpole wrote in 1741, 'and all the world will be there.'

It was only as Poet Laureate, for he could not write poetry, that Cibber displayed his inferiority. The honour was conferred in 1730, two years after Gay had produced the *Beggar's Opera*, when Pope was in the height of his fame, when Thomson had published his *Seasons* and Young *The Universal Passion*. Pope, as a Roman Catholic, was out of the running, but there were poets living who would have saved the office from the disgrace brought upon it by Cibber. 'As to Cibber,' Swift wrote to Pope, 'if I had any inclination to excuse the Court, I would allege that the Laureate's place is entirely in the Lord Chamberlain's

gift; but who makes Lord Chamberlains is another question.' The sole result of the appointment that deserves to be recorded is an epigram by Johnson, as just as it is severe:

> 'Augustus still survives in Maro's strain,
> And Spenser's verse prolongs Eliza's reign;
> Great George's acts let tuneful Cibber sing,
> For Nature formed the Poet for the King!'

Of poetry there is no trace in the five volumes of his dramatic works; there are few touches of nature, and little genuine wit, but these defects are to some extent supplied by sparkling dialogue and lively badinage. Cibber is often sentimental, and when he is sentimental he is odious. His attempts to express strong emotion and honourable feeling excite laughter instead of sympathy, and on this account it is difficult to accept without some deduction Mr. Ward's favourable judgment of *The Careless Husband*,[1] which, if it be one of the cleverest of Cibber's dramas, is also one of the most conspicuous for this defect. Here, as elsewhere, Cibber should have left sentiment alone. Imagine a lover exclaiming to a relenting mistress, 'Oh, let my soul thus bending to your power, adore this soft descending goodness!" or a man conversing in the following strain with a wife who has discovered and forgiven his infidelities:

'*Sir Charles.* Come, I will not shock your softness by any untimely blush for what is past, but rather soothe you to a pleasure at my sense of joy for my recovered happiness to come. Give then to my new-born love what name you please, it cannot, shall not be too kind. Oh! it cannot be too soft for what my soul swells up with emulation to deserve. Receive me then entire at last, and take what yet no woman ever truly had, my conquered heart.

'*Lady Easy.* Oh, the soft treasure! Oh, the dear reward

[1] Ward's *History of English Dramatic Literature*, vol. ii. p. 597.

of long-desiring love — thus, thus to have you mine is something more than happiness, 'tis double life and madness of abounding joy. . . .

'*Sir Charles.* Oh, thou engaging virtue! But I'm too slow in doing justice to thy love. I know thy softness will refuse me; but remember, I insist upon it—let thy woman be discharged this minute.'

It has been said that Cibber wrote genteel comedy because he lived in the best society. If this assertion be true, the reader of his plays will decide that the best society of those days was unrefined and immoral, and that genteel comedy can be extremely vulgar. Cibber's dramas are coarse in incident, and often offensive in suggestion. The language is frequently gross, and even when he writes, or professes to write, with a moral purpose, his method may justly offend a rigid moralist. Moreover his comedy, like that of the dramatists of the Restoration, is of a wholly artificial type. Human nature has comparatively little place in it, and the fine ladies and gentlemen, the fops and fools who play their parts in his scenes, belong to a world which has no existence off the boards of the theatre.

His one work which is still read by all students of the drama, and by many who are not students, is the *Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber* (1740), which Dr. Johnson, who sneered at actors, allowed to be very entertaining. It is that, and something more, for it contains much just and generous criticism. Cibber was the author or adapter of about thirty plays, and in the latter vocation did not spare Shakespeare.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762).

Letter writing, a delightful branch of literature, attained its highest excellence in the eighteenth century. It is an art which gains most, if the paradox may be allowed, by being artless. The carefully studied epistle, written

with a view to publication, may have its value, but it cannot have the charm of a letter written in the familiar intercourse of friendship. It is the correspondence prompted by the heart which reaches the heart of the reader. The humour, the gaiety, the tenderness, and the chatty details that make a letter attractive, should be prompted by the feelings and events of the hour. Carefully constructed sentences and rhetorical flourishes ring hollow; to write for effect is to write badly, and to make a display of knowledge is to reveal an ignorance of the art.

For letter writing, although the most natural of literary gifts, is not wholly due to nature. It is the outcome of many qualities which need cultivation; the soil that produces such fruit must have been carefully tilled. In our day epistolary correspondence has been in great measure destroyed by the penny post and by rapidity of communication. In the last century postage was costly: and although the burden was frequently and unjustly lightened by franks, the transmission of letters was slow and uncertain. Letters, therefore, were seldom written unless the writer had something definite to say, and had leisure in which to say it. Much time was spent in the occupation, letters were carefully preserved as family heirlooms, and thus it has come to pass that much of our knowledge of the age, and very much of the pleasure to be gained from a study of the period, is due to its letter writers. The list of them is a striking one, for it includes the names of Swift and Steele, of Pope and Gay, of Bolingbroke and Chesterfield, of Mrs. Delany and Mrs. Thrale, and of the three gifted rivals in the art, Gray, Horace Walpole, and Cowper.

In the band of authors famous for their correspondence, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu holds a conspicuous place. Reference has been already made to the Pope correspondence, large in bulk and large too in interest. To this

Lady Mary contributed slightly, and the greater portion of her letters were addressed to her husband, to her sister, Lady Mar, and to her daughter, the Countess of Bute. She was shrewd enough to know their value: 'Keep my letters,' she wrote, 'they will be as good as Madame de Sévigné's forty years hence;' and they are, perhaps, as good as letters can be which are written with a sense of their value, which Madame de Sévigné's were not. Lady Mary, who may be said to have belonged to the wits from her infancy, for in her eighth year she was made the toast of the Kit Kat Club, was not only a beauty, but a woman of some learning and of the keenest intelligence. At twenty she translated the *Enchciridion* of Epictetus. She was a great reader and a good critic, unless, which often happened, political prejudices warped her judgment. She had considerable facility in rhyming, and both with tongue and pen cultivated many enmities, the deadliest of her foes being the poet who was at one time her most ardent admirer. The story of Lady Mary's career, with its vicissitudes and singularities, may be read in Lord Wharncliffe's edition of her *Life and Letters*. She is a prominent figure in the literature of the period, and made several passing contributions to it, but apart from a few facile and far from decent verses her letters are the sole legacy she has left behind her for the literary student. Some of them, and especially those addressed to her sister the Countess of Mar, are often coarse; those to her daughter the Countess of Bute exhibit good sense, and all abound in lively sallies, interesting anecdotes, and the personal allusions which give a charm to correspondence. The section containing the letters written during her husband's embassy to Constantinople (1716-1718) is perhaps the best known.

Among the strangest of Lady Mary's letters are those addressed to her future husband, whom she requests to

settle an annuity upon her in order to propitiate her friends. In one of them she describes her father's purpose to marry her as he thought fit without regarding her inclinations, and observes that having declined to marry 'where it is impossible to love,' she is bidden to consult her relatives: 'I told my intention to all my nearest relations. I was surprised at their blaming it to the greatest degree. I was told they were sorry I would ruin myself; but if I was so unreasonable they could not blame my F. [father] whatever he inflicted on me. I objected I did not love him. They made answer they found no necessity of loving; if I lived well with him that was all was required of me; and that if I considered this town I should find very few women in love with their husbands and yet a many happy. It was in vain to dispute with such prudent people."

This incident is characteristic of the period, but Lady Mary's letters to Wortley Montagu are more characteristic of the woman who had her own views of female propriety, and of the right method of love-making. To escape from the man she hated, she eloped with Wortley, and if, in story-book phrase, the curiously-matched couple 'lived happily ever afterwards,' it was probably because for more than twenty years they lived apart.

Of the following letter, written in her old age, it has been aptly said that 'the graceful cynicism of Horace and Pope has perhaps never been more successfully reproduced in prose.' [1]

'Daughter, daughter! Don't call names; You are always abusing my pleasures, which is what no mortal will bear. Trash, lumber and stuff are the titles you give to my favourite amusement. If I called a white staff a stick of wood, a gold key gilded brass, and the ensigns of illus-

[1] *Four Centuries of English Letters*, edited and arranged by W. Baptiste Scoones, p. 214.

trious orders coloured strings, this may be philosophically true, but would be very ill received. We have all our playthings; happy are they that can be contented with those they can obtain; those hours are spent in the wisest manner that can easiest shade the ills of life, and are the least productive of ill-consequences. . . . . The active scenes are over at my age. I indulge with all the art I can my taste for reading. If I would confine it to valuable books, they are almost as rare as valuable men. I must be content with what I can find. As I approach a second childhood, I endeavour to enter into the pleasures of it. Your youngest son is perhaps at this very moment riding on a poker with great delight, not at all regretting that it is not a gold one, and much less wishing it an Arabian horse which he would not know how to manage. I am reading an idle tale, not expecting wit or truth in it, and am very glad it is not metaphysics to puzzle my judgment, or history to mislead my opinion. He fortifies his health by exercise; I calm my cares by oblivion. The methods may appear low to busy people; but if he improves his strength, and I forget my infirmities, we both attain very desirable ends.'

Lady Mary, it may be added, deserves to be remembered for her courage in trying inoculation on her own children, and then introducing it into this country. This was in 1721, seventy-eight years before Jenner discovered a more excellent way of grappling with the small pox.

Philip Dormer Stanhope Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773).

Lord Chesterfield's position in the literature of the period is also among the letter writers. He was emphatically a man of affairs, and as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1745, gained a high reputation. He entered upon his labours with the resolution to be independent of party, and during his brief administration did all that man could do for the benefit of the country. In his public career, Chesterfield has the

reputation of an orator who spoke 'most exquisitely well;' he was an able diplomatist, and probably no man of the time took a wider interest in public affairs. In a corrupt age, too, he appears to have been politically incorruptible: 'I call corruption,' he writes, 'the taking of a sixpence more than the just and known salary of your employment under any pretence whatsoever.' The reform of the Calendar, in which he was assisted by two great mathematicians, Bradley and the Earl of Macclesfield, is also one of his honourable claims to remembrance.

On the other hand, Chesterfield, whom George II. called 'a tea-table scoundrel,' was an inveterate gambler, he mistook vice for virtue, practised dissimulation as an art, and studied men's weaknesses in order that he might flatter them. One of the chief ends of man, in the Earl's opinion, was to shine in society; we need not therefore wonder that Johnson, with his sturdy honesty, revolted from Chesterfield's insincerity, and we have to thank the Earl's character for, perhaps, the noblest piece of invective in the language. If, however, he neglected Johnson at the time when his help would have been of service, he appreciated the society of men of letters, and took his part among the wits of the age. 'I used,' he tells his son, 'to think myself in company as much above me when I was with Mr. Addison and Mr. Pope as if I had been with all the princes in Europe.'

As an essayist, although Chesterfield cannot compete with Addison or Steele, he is far from contemptible, and his twenty-three papers in the *World* (1753-1756) may still be read with pleasure. His literary reputation is based upon the *Letters* (1774)[1] to his illegitimate son written for

[1] These *Letters* were not published until after the earl's death, but many of them belong, chronologically, to our period. The first letter of the series was written in 1738.

the purpose of making him a fine gentleman, but the young man had no aptitude for the part. His father offered him 'a present of the Graces,' and he despised the gift. The *Letters*, which Johnson denounced in language better fitted for his day than for ours, abound in worldly sagacity and wise counsels; the best that can be said of them from a moral point of view is that they show the extremely low standpoint of the writer. He is honestly desirous of benefiting his son and advancing his interest in life, and so far as morality will do this it is earnestly inculcated. 'A real man of fashion,' he says, 'observes decency: at least neither borrows nor affects vices; and, if he unfortunately has any, he gratifies them with choice, delicacy and secrecy.' He observes that an intrigue with a woman of fashion is an amusement which a man of sense and decency may pursue with a proper regard for his character; gallantry without debauchery being 'the elegant pleasure of a rational being.'

Chesterfield's son, who was educated for a diplomatist, is told that the art of pleasing is more necessary in his profession than perhaps in any other. 'Make your court particularly, and show distinguished attentions to such men and women as are best at Court, highest in the fashion and in the opinion of the public; speak advantageously of them behind their backs, in companies who you have reason to believe will tell them again.'

The necessity for dissimulation, constantly enjoined by his father was not forgotten by Philip Stanhope. So effectually did he conceal his marriage that the Earl was not aware of it until after his son's death.

George Lyttelton, afterwards Lord Lyttelton, has a place among the poets in the collections of Anderson and Chalmers. Some of his best verses were written when a school-boy at Eton, and are worthy of a clever schoolboy

George Lyttelton (1708-1773).

The *Monody* on his wife's death has the merit of sincere feeling, expressed in one or two passages poetically. In 1747 he published his *Dissertation on the Conversion of St. Paul,* 'a treatise,' says Dr. Johnson, 'to which infidelity has never been able to fabricate a specious answer.' He made himself conspicuous in parliament as an opponent of Walpole, and after the fall of that minister was appointed one of the Lords of the Treasury. In 1760 Lyttelton published his *Dialogues of the Dead,* a volume for which he owes much to Fénelon. This was followed a few years later by a History of Henry II. in three volumes, upon which great labour was expended. He is said to have had the whole history printed twice over, and many sheets four or five times, an amusement which cost him £1,000. The work is praised by Mr. J. R. Green as 'a full and sober account of the time.'

Lyttelton died at Hagley Park in his sixty-fourth year. Close to Hagley, Shenstone had his little estate of the Leasowes, and the poet is said to have cherished the absurd fancy that Lord Lyttelton was envious of its beauty. He is now chiefly remembered as the patron of Thomson, whom he called 'one of the best and most beloved' of his friends.

Joseph Spence (1698-1768).

Joseph Spence, a warm friend and admirer of Pope in the poet's later life, had the happy peculiarity of keeping free from the party animosities of the time. His course throughout was that of a gentleman, and to him we owe the little volume of *Anecdotes* which every student of Pope has learnt to value. Spence had much of Boswell's curiosity and hero-worship, but there is neither insight into character in his pages, nor any trace of the dramatic skill which makes Boswell's narrative so delightful. At the

same time there is every indication that he strove to give the sayings of the poet, as far as possible, in his own words. Johnson and Warton saw the *Anecdotes* in manuscript, but strange to say, the collection was not published until 1820, when two separate editions appeared simultaneously. The publication by Spence in 1727 of *An Essay on Pope's Translation of Homer's Odyssey* led to an acquaintance which soon became intimate between the poet and his critic. Apart from literature, they had more than one point of interest in common. Like Pope, Spence was devoted to his mother, and like Pope he had a passion for landscape gardening. His mild virtues and engaging disposition are said to be portrayed in the *Tales of the Genii*, under the character of Fincal the Dervise of the Groves. In 1747 he published his *Polymetis, an Enquiry into the agreement between the Works of the Roman Poets and the Remains of Ancient Artists*. Under the *nom de plume* of Sir Harry Beaumont, Spence produced a volume of *Moralities or Essays, Letters, Fables and Translations* (1753), and in the following year an account of the blind poet Blacklock. For a learned tailor, Thomas Hill by name, he also performed a similarly kind office, comparing him in *A Parallel in the Manner of Plutarch* with the famous linguist Magliabecchi. Spence was made Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1728, and held the post for ten years. His end was a sad one. He was accidentally drowned in a canal in the garden which he had loved so well.

CHAPTER VII.

FRANCIS ATTERBURY—LORD SHAFTESBURY—BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE—LORD BOLINGBROKE—BISHOP BERKELEY—WILLIAM LAW—BISHOP BUTLER—BISHOP WARBURTON.

Francis Atterbury (1662-1732).

During the first half of the eighteenth century the position held by Bishop Atterbury was one of high eminence. Addison ranked him with the most illustrious geniuses of his age; Pope said he was one of the greatest men in polite learning the nation ever possessed; Doddridge called him the glory of English orators; and Johnson said that for style his sermons are among the best.

Unfortunately Atterbury's literary gifts, like his oratory, lack the merit of permanence, and his sermons, more conspicuous for eloquence than for weightiness of matter, although extremely popular at the time, have long ceased to be read. His prominence among the Queen Anne wits,—and he was admired by them all,—is a sufficient reason for saying a few words about him in these pages.

He was born in 1662, and, like Prior, educated at Westminster under the famous Dr. Busby. Thence he went to Christ Church, Oxford, where he gained a good reputation. He undertook the tutorship of the Hon. C. Boyle, a young man of more spirit than judgment, who had the audacity to enter the lists with Bentley in a matter of scholarship.

For this rash deed Atterbury must be held responsible. Sir William Temple had published a foolish but eloquently written essay in defence of the ancient writers in comparison with the modern. In this essay he praises warmly the *Letters of Phalaris*. Of these letters Boyle, with the help of Atterbury and other members of Christ Church, published a new edition to satisfy the demand caused by Temple's essay. Bentley, roused to reply by a remark of Boyle in his preface, proved that the *Letters* were not only spurious but contemptible. Under his pupil's name Atterbury replied to Bentley's *Dissertations*, and to the discussion, as the reader will remember, Swift added wit if not argument.

For the moment Boyle's, or rather Atterbury's success, was great, for wit and rhetoric are powerful persuasives. The authors, too, had the Christ Church men to back them, the arch-critic having treated them with contempt. Atterbury's share in the work, as he tells Boyle, "consisted in writing more than half the book, in reviewing a great part of the rest, and in transcribing the whole." His *Examination of Dr. Bentley's Dissertations* (1698) is a brilliant piece of work, and 'deserves the praise,' says Macaulay, 'whatever that praise may be worth, of being the best book ever written by any man on the wrong side of a question of which he was profoundly ignorant.' Having taken holy orders, Atterbury became a court preacher, and ample clerical honours fell to his share. In 1700 he published a book entitled, *The Rights, Powers, and Privileges of an English Convocation Stated and Vindicated*, which was warmly applauded by High Churchmen. In 1701 he was appointed Archdeacon of Totness, and afterwards Prebend of Exeter. He became the favourite chaplain of Queen Anne, and when Prince George died proved the power of his eloquence by representing 'his unassuming virtues in

such high relief that his widow could not help feeling her irreparable loss.'

Atterbury was made successively Dean of Carlisle and of Christ Church, and in 1713 succeeded Sprat as Dean of Westminster and Bishop of Rochester. Before making Swift's acquaintance he recommended his friend Trelawney, Bishop of Exeter, to read the *Tale of a Tub*, a book which is to be valued, 'in spite of its profaneness,' as 'an original in its kind, full of wit, humour, good sense, and learning.' Atterbury's taste for literature was not always so discriminative. He advised Pope, as has been already stated, to 'polish' *Samson Agonistes*, declared that all verses should have instruction at the bottom of them, and told the poet, as though he had discovered a merit, that his poetry was 'all over morality from the beginning to the end of it.' He ventured occasionally into the verse-making field himself, and wrote a song to Silvia, in which, after admitting that he had loved before as men worship strange deities, he adds:

'My heart, 'tis true, has often ranged,
Like bees on gaudy flowers,
And many a thousand loves has changed,
Till it was fixed on yours.

'But, Silvia, when I saw those eyes,
'Twas soon determined there;
Stars might as well forsake the skies,
And vanish into air.

'When I from this great rule do err,
New beauties to adore,
May I again turn wanderer,
And never settle more.'

The close friendship between Atterbury and Pope did honour to both men, and when Pope went to London he would 'lie at the deanery.' There, unknown to his friend,

the bishop carried on his Jacobite intrigues, and there may still be seen, in a residence made famous by more than one great name, a secret room in which Atterbury concealed his treasonable correspondence. The poet did not believe that his friend was guilty, but it has been well known since the publication of the Stuart papers, more than forty years ago, that the splendid defence made by Atterbury at his trial in the House of Lords was based upon a falsehood. For years the bishop appears to have corresponded, under feigned names and by the help of ciphers, with 'the king over the water;' but the plot which led to his imprisonment and ultimate exile was not discovered until 1722, when he was arrested for high treason. At his trial he called God to witness his innocence; and when Pope took leave of him in the Tower he told the poet he would allow him to call his sentence a just one if he should ever find that he had dealings with the Pretender in his exile. Pope gave evidence at his trial, and, as he told Spence, lost his self-possession and made two or three blunders.

Atterbury was exiled in June, 1723. On reaching Calais he heard that Bolingbroke had just arrived there on his way to England, having had a royal pardon. 'Then I am exchanged,' he said.

The pathetic story of his banishment, and of his devoted daughter's illness and voyage to the south of France, where after a union of a few hours, she died in her father's arms, is full of the most touching details, and may be read in Atterbury's correspondence. 'She is gone,' the bishop wrote, 'and I must follow her. When I do, may my latter end be like hers! It was my business to have taught her to die; instead of it, she has taught me.' Like Fielding's account of his *Voyage to Lisbon*, the letters give a picture of the time, and of travelling discomforts and

difficulties of which we, in these more fortunate days, know nothing. The bishop, who did not long survive his daughter, died in 1732, but before the end came he defended himself admirably from the accusation of Oldmixon, a libeller who stands in the pillory of the *Dunciad*, that he had helped to garble Clarendon's *History*. The body was carried to England and privately buried by the side of his daughter in Westminster Abbey. The eloquence of Atterbury's sermons—there are four volumes of them in print—has not secured to them a lasting place in literature, but they are distinguished by purity of style, and have enough of *unction* to make them highly effective as pulpit discourses. In book form, too, they were for a long time popular, and reached an eighth edition about thirty years after the bishop's death. The eloquent sermon on the death of Lady Cutts endows the lady with such an array of virtues, that one is inclined to wonder how so many rare qualities could have been exhibited in so brief a life:

'She excelled in all the characters that belonged to her, and was in a great measure equal to all the obligations that she lay under. She was devout without superstition; strict, without ill humour; good-natured, without weakness; cheerful, without levity; regular, without affectation. She was to her husband the best of wives, the most agreeable of companions, and most faithful of friends; to her servants the best of mistresses; to her relations extremely respectful; to her inferiors very obliging; and by all that knew her, either nearly or at a distance, she was reckoned and confessed to be one of the best of women. And yet all this goodness and all this excellence was bounded within the compass of eighteen years and as many days; for no longer was she allowed to live among us. She was snatched out of the world as soon almost as she had made her appearance in it, like a jewel of high price just shown a little, and then put up again, and we were deprived of her by that time we had learnt to value her. But circles may

be complete though small; the perfection of life doth not consist in the length of it.'

As a friend of literature and of men of letters, Atterbury claims the student's recognition, and the five volumes of his correspondence deserve to be consulted.

Anthony, third Lord Shaftesbury (1671-1713).

'I will tell you,' writes the poet Gray, 'how Lord Shaftesbury came to be a philosopher in vogue: first, he was a lord; secondly, he was as vain as any of his readers; thirdly, men are very prone to believe what they do not understand; fourthly, they will believe anything at all provided they are under no obligation to believe it; fifthly, they love to take a new road, even when that road leads nowhere; sixthly, he was reckoned a fine writer, and seemed always to mean more than he said. Would you have any more reasons? An interval of above forty years has pretty well destroyed the charm.'

One hundred and thirty-five years have gone by since Gray wrote his estimate of Lord Shaftesbury, whose *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) passed through several editions in the last century. The first volume consists of: *A Letter concerning Enthusiasm*, *An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* and *Advice to an Author*; Vol. ii. contains *An Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit* (1699), and *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody* (1709), and Vol. iii. contains *Miscellaneous Reflections* and the *Judgments of Hercules*.

Shaftesbury was a Deist, and while professing to honour the Christian faith, which he terms 'our holy religion,' exercises his wit and casuistry and command of English to undermine it. Pope, who shows in the *Essay on Man* that he had read the *Characteristics*, said that to his knowledge 'the work had done more harm to revealed religion in England than all the works of infidelity,' a judgment

which may seem extravagant, for Shaftesbury is too vague and rhetorical greatly to influence thoughtful readers, and too much of a 'virtuoso,' to use his own words, for readers of another class; yet the fact that the work passed, as we have said, through several editions, shows that the author had a considerable public to whom he could appeal. Moreover, it is clear that what Mr. Balfour calls 'the shallow optimism' of his creed was not deemed so inconsiderable then as it now appears, or Berkeley would not have deemed it necessary to controvert his arguments in the third Dialogue of his *Alciphron*. Like Berkeley, Shaftesbury occasionally makes use of the dialogue very effectively, but he has not the bishop's incisiveness. His style, though often faulty, and giving one the impression that the author is affected, and wishes to say fine things, is at its best fresh and lucid. The reader will observe that whatever be the topic Shaftesbury professes to discuss, his one aim is to assert his principles as a free-thinking and free-speaking philosopher. His inferences, his illustrations, his criticisms, and exaltation of the 'moral sense,' are all so many underhanded blows at the faith which he never openly opposes.

Thus his essay on the *Freedom of Wit and Humour* is chiefly written in defence of raillery in the discussion of serious subjects, when managed 'with good breeding,' and for 'a liberty in decent language to question everything' amongst gentlemen and friends. He regards ridicule as the antidote to enthusiasm, believes in the harmony and perfection of nature, and considers that evil only exists in our ignorance. Mr. Leslie Stephen, whose impartiality in estimating an author like Shaftesbury will not be questioned, calls him a wearisome and perplexed writer, whose rhetoric is flimsy, but who has 'a true vigour and originality which redeems him from contempt.'

Judged by his influence on the age Shaftesbury's place in the history of literature and of philosophy is an important one. Seed springs up quickly when the soil is prepared for it, and Shaftesbury by his belief in the perfectibility of human nature through the aid of culture, appealed, as Mandeville also did from a lower and opposite platform, to the views current in polite society. According to Shaftesbury men have a natural instinct for virtue, and the sense of what is beautiful enables the virtuoso to reject what is evil and to cleave to what is good. Let a man once see that to be wicked is to be miserable, and virtue will be dear for its own sake apart from the fear of punishment or the hope of reward. He found salvation for the world in a cultivated taste, but had no gospel for the men whose tastes were not cultivated.

Voltaire sneered at the optimism of the *Essay on Man* and of the *Characteristics*. 'Shaftesbury,' he says, 'who made the fable fashionable, was a very unhappy man. I have seen Bolingbroke a prey to vexation and rage, and Pope, whom he induced to put this sorry jest into verse, was as much to be pitied as any man I have ever known; mis-shapen in body, dissatisfied in mind, always ill, always a burden to himself, and harassed by a hundred enemies to his very last moment.'

Bernard de Mandeville (1670?-1733).

Bernard de Mandeville gained much notoriety by his *Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Public Benefits* (1723). The book opens with a poem in doggrel verse called *The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves turned honest*, the purport of which is to show that as the bees became virtuous, they ceased to be successful. He closes with the moral that

> 'To enjoy the world's conveniences,
> Be famed in war, yet live in ease,

Without great vices is a vain
Utopia, seated in the brain.
Fraud, Luxury, and Pride must live,
While we the benefits receive.'

In the prose which follows the fable, Mandeville may at least claim the credit of being outspoken, and he does not scruple to say that modesty is a sham and that what seems like virtue is nothing but self-love. 'I often,' he says, 'compare the virtues of good men to your large china jars; they make a fine show, but look into a thousand of them, and you will find nothing in them but dust and cobwebs.'

While declaring that he is far from encouraging vice, he regards it as essential to the well-being of society. The degradation of the race excites his amusement, and the fact that he cannot see a way of escape from it, causes no regret. Shaftesbury's arguments excited the mirth of a man who believed neither in present nor future good. 'Two systems,' he says, 'cannot be more opposite than his lordship's and mine. His notions, I confess, are generous and refined. They are a high compliment to human kind, and capable, by the help of a little enthusiasm, of inspiring us with the most noble sentiments concerning the dignity of our exalted nature. What pity it is that they are not true.'

The author of the *Fable of the Bees* writes coarsely for coarse readers, and the arguments by which he supports his graceless theory merit the infamy generally awarded to them.[1] The book was attacked by Warburton and Law, and with much force and humour by Berkeley, in the second

[1] Readers who remember Mr. Browning's estimate of 'sage Mandeville' in his *Parleyings with Certain Persons* may deem this criticism unjust; but the De Mandeville who speaks in that poem is the creation of the poet's imagination, or rather he is Mr. Browning himself.

Dialogue of *Alciphron*. But the bishop, to use a homely phrase, does not hit the right nail on the head. Instead of arguing that virtue and goodness are realities, while evil, being unreal and antagonistic to man's nature, is an enemy to be fought against and conquered, Berkeley takes a lower ground, and is content to show in his reply to Mandeville that virtue is more profitable to a state than vice. He annihilates many of Mandeville's arguments in a masterly style, but it was left to the author of the *Serious Call* to strike at the root of Mandeville's fallacy, and to show how the seat of virtue, if I may apply Hooker's noble words with regard to law, 'is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power.'

Lord Bolingbroke (1678-1751).

The life of Henry St. John was a mass of contradictions. He was a brilliant politician who affected to be a wise statesman, a traitor to his country while pretending to be a patriot, an orator whose lips distilled honied phrases which his actions belied, a man of insatiable ambition who masked as a philosopher, a profligate without shame, a faithless friend, and an unscrupulous opponent. Blessed with every charm of manner, features, and voice, with a taste for literature and a large faculty of acquisition, he was a slave to the meanest vices. A Secretary of State at thirty-two, no man probably ever entered upon public life with brighter prospects, and the secret of all his failures was due to the want of character. 'Few people,' says Lord Hervey, 'ever believed him without being deceived or trusted him without being betrayed; he was one to whom prosperity was no advantage, and adversity no instruction.'

It is said that his genius as an orator was of a high order and this we can believe the more readily since the style of

his works is distinctly oratorical. In speech so much depends upon voice and manner that it is possible for a shallow thinker to be an extremely attractive speaker; Bolingbroke's speeches have not been preserved, and we may therefore continue, if we please, to hold with Pitt, that they are the most desirable of all the lost fragments of literature; his writings, far more showy than solid, do not convey a lofty impression of intellectual power. Obvious truths and well-worn truisms are uttered in high-sounding words, but in no department of thought can it be said that Bolingbroke breaks new ground. Much that he wrote was for the day and died with it, and if his more ambitious efforts, written with an eye to posterity, cannot justly be described as unreadable, they contain comparatively little which makes them worthy to be read.

His defence of his conduct in *A Letter to Sir William Windham*, written in 1717, but not published until after the author's death, though worthless as a defence, is a fine piece of special pleading in Bolingbroke's best style. It could deceive no one acquainted with the part played by the author before the death of Queen Anne, and afterwards in exile, but it afforded him an opportunity for attacking his former colleague, Oxford, with all the weapons available by an unscrupulous and powerful assailant. He declares in this letter that he preferred exile rather than to make common cause with the man whom he abhorred. Writing of Oxford as a colleague in the government of the country he observes in a skilfully turned passage:

'The ocean which environs us is an emblem of our government; and the pilot and the minister are in similar circumstances. It seldom happens that either of them can steer a direct course, and they both arrive at their port by means which frequently seem to carry them from it. But as the work advances the conduct of him who leads it on

with real abilities clears up, the appearing inconsistencies are reconciled, and when it is once consummated, the whole shows itself so uniform, so plain, and so natural, that every dabbler in politics will be apt to think he could have done the same. But on the other hand the man who proposes no such object, who substitutes artifice in the place of ability, who, instead of leading parties and governing accidents, is eternally agitated backwards and forwards by both, who begins every day something new, and carries nothing on to perfection, may impose awhile on the world: but a little sooner or a little later the mystery will be revealed, and nothing will be found to be couched under it but a thread of pitiful expedients, the ultimate end of which never extended farther than living from day to day. Which of these pictures resembles Oxford most you will determine.'

It has been said with somewhat daring exaggeration, that Burke never produced anything nobler than this passage, and the writer regards the whole composition of the *Letter to Windham* as almost faultless.[1]

That it is Bolingbroke's masterpiece may be readily admitted, but in this *Letter*, as elsewhere, the merits of Bolingbroke's style are those of the popular orator who conceals repetitions, contradictory statements, and emptiness of thought under a dazzling display of rhetoric. That he had splendid gifts and exhibited an extraordinary ingenuity of resource was acknowledged by friend and foe. At one time taking a distinguished part in European affairs, at another artfully intriguing, sometimes posing as a moralist and philosopher while a slave to debauchery, and at other times affecting a love of retirement while a slave to ambition—Bolingbroke acted a part which made him one of the most conspicuous figures of the time. He knew how to fascinate men of greater genius than he possessed,

[1] *Bolingbroke: a Historical Study*, p. 133. By J. Churton Collins.

and how to guide men intellectually his superiors. The witchcraft of his wit and the charm of his manners no longer disturb the judgment. As a statesman Bolingbroke is now comparatively despised, as a man of letters he is generally regarded as a brilliant pretender, and if his name survives in the history of literature it is chiefly due to the friendship of Pope. Unfortunately the memory of this celebrated friendship is associated with one of the most ignoble acts of Bolingbroke's life. When Pope lay dying, Bolingbroke wept over his friend exclaiming, 'O great God, what is man!' and Spence relates that upon telling his lordship how Pope whenever he was sensible said something kindly of his friends as if his humanity outlasted his understanding, Bolingbroke replied, '"It has so! I never in my life knew a man that had so tender a heart for his particular friends or a more general friendship for mankind. I have known him these thirty years, and value myself more for that man's love than"—sinking his head and losing himself in tears.' His sorrow was speedily changed to anger. Pope, no doubt in admiration of his friend's genius, had privately printed 1,500 copies of his *Patriot King*, one of Bolingbroke's ablest but most sophistical works. The philosopher had only allowed a few copies to be printed for his friends, and the discovery of Pope's conduct roused his indignation. In 1749 he put a corrected copy of the work into Mallet's hands for publication with an advertisement in which Pope is treated with contempt. He had not the courage to assail the memory of his friend openly, and hired an unprincipled man to do it. The poet had acted trickily, after his wonted habit, though in all likelihood with the design of doing Bolingbroke a service. It was a fault to be forgiven by a friend, but Bolingbroke, after nursing his anger for five years, gave vent to it in this contemptible and underhand way. He died two years

afterwards, and in 1754 the posthumous publication of Bolingbroke's *Philosophical Writings* by Mallet, aroused a storm of indignation in the country, which his debauchery and political immorality had failed to excite. Johnson's saying on the occasion is well-known:

'Sir, he was a scoundrel and a coward; a scoundrel for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward because he had not resolution to fire it off himself, but left half-a-crown to a beggarly Scotchman to draw the trigger after his death.'

The most noteworthy estimate of Bolingbroke's character made in our day comes from the pen of Mr. John Morley,[1] who describes as follows his position as a man of letters. 'He handled the great and difficult instrument of written language with such freedom and copiousness, such vivacity and ease, that in spite of much literary foppery and falsetto, he ranks in all that musicians call execution, only below the three or four highest masters of English prose. Yet of all the characters in our history Bolingbroke must be pronounced to be most of a charlatan; of all the writing in our literature, his is the hollowest, the flashiest, the most insincere.' This is true. By his 'execution,' consummate though it be, he is unable to conceal his insincerity and shallowness. 'Bolingbroke,' said Lord Shelburne, was 'all surface,' and in that sentence his character is written.

'People seem to think,' said Carlyle, 'that a style can be put off or put on, not like a skin, but like a coat. Is not a skin verily a product and close kinsfellow of all that lies under it,—exact type of the nature of the beast, not to be plucked off without flaying and death?'

Two years after the publication of the *Philosophical Writings*, Edmund Burke, then a young man of twenty-

[1] *Walpole*, p. 79. By John Morley. Macmillan.

four, published *A Vindication of Natural Society*, in a *Letter to Lord ——. By a late noble writer*, in which Lord Bolingbroke's style is imitated, and his arguments against revealed religion applied to exhibit 'the miseries and evils arising to mankind from every species of Artificial Society.' So close is the imitation of Bolingbroke's style and mode of argument in this piece of irony, that it was for a time believed to be a genuine production, and Mallet found it necessary to disavow it publicly.

Of Bolingbroke's Works, the *Dissertation on Parties* appeared in 1735. *Letters on Patriotism*, and *Idea of a Patriot King*, in 1749; *Letters on the Study of History*, in 1752; *Letter to Sir W. Windham*, 1753, and the *Philosophical Writings*, as already stated, in 1754. Chronologically, therefore, he would belong to the Handbook which deals with the latter half of the century, were it not that his most important works were posthumous, and that Bolingbroke's intimate relations with Pope place him among the most conspicuous figures belonging to Pope's age.

George Berkeley (1685-1753).

Among the men of high intellect who flourished in the age of Pope, George Berkeley is one of the most distinguished. Born in 1685 of poor parents, in a cottage near Dysert Castle, in Kilkenny, he went up to Trinity College, Dublin, in 1700, and there, first as student, and afterwards as tutor, he remained for thirteen years. In the course of them he was ordained, and gained a fellowship. In 1709 he published his *Essay on Vision*, and in the following year the *Principles of Human Knowledge*, works which thus early made him famous as a philosopher, and a puzzle to many who failed to understand his 'new principle' with regard to the existence of matter.

In 1712 Berkeley visited England, probably for the first time, and was introduced to the London wits. Already in

these youthful days there was in him much of that magic power which some men exercise unconsciously and irresistibly. Swift felt the spell, called Berkeley a great philosopher, and spoke of him to all the Ministers; while Atterbury, upon being asked what he thought of him, exclaimed: 'So much understanding, so much knowledge, so much innocence, and such humility, I did not think had been the portion of any but angels till I saw this gentleman.' An incident occurred, it is conjectured during the course of this visit, which led to memorable results. He dined once with Swift at Mrs. Vanhomrigh's, and met her daughter Hester. Many years later, *Vanessa* destroyed the will she had made in Swift's favour, and left half of her property to Berkeley. While in London the future bishop was warmly welcomed by Steele, and wrote several essays for him in the *Guardian* against the Freethinkers, and especially against Anthony Collins (1676-1729), whose arguments in his *Discourse on Freethinking* (1713) are ridiculed in the *Scriblerus Memoirs*. Collins, it may be observed here, wrote a treatise several years later on the *Grounds of the Christian Religion* (1724) which called forth thirty-five answers. During this visit Berkeley also published one of his most original works, *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, a book marked by that consummate beauty of style for which he is distinguished.

In November, 1713, the Earl of Peterborough was sent on an embassage to the King of Sicily, and on Swift's recommendation took Berkeley with him as his chaplain and secretary. Ten months were spent on this occasion in France and Italy. Another continental tour followed, in the course of which Berkeley wrote to Arbuthnot of his ascent of Vesuvius, and to Pope of his life at Naples. Five years were spent abroad, and he returned to England to

learn of the failure of the South Sea Scheme. In his *Essay towards Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* (1721), the main argument is the obvious one, that national salvation is only to be secured by individual uprightness. He deplores 'the trifling vanity of apparel' which we have learned from France, advocates the revival of sumptuary laws, considers that we are 'doomed to be undone' by luxury, and by the want of public spirit, and declares that 'neither Venice nor Paris, nor any other town in any part of the world ever knew such an expensive ruinous folly as our masquerade.'

In the summer of this year he was again in London, and Pope asked him to spend a week in his 'Tusculum.' One promotion followed another until Berkeley became Dean of Derry, with an income of from £1,500 to £2,000 a year. He did not hold this dignified position long, having conceived the magnificent but Utopian idea of founding a Missionary College in the Bermudas—the 'Summer Isles' celebrated in the verse of Waller and of Marvell—for the conversion of America.

And now Berkeley exhibited his amazing power of influencing other men. The members of the Scriblerus Club laughed at the Dean's project, but so powerful was his eloquence, that 'those who came to scoff remained to subscribe.' Moreover, with Sir Robert Walpole as Prime Minister, he actually obtained a grant from the State of £20,000 in order to carry out the project, the king gave a charter, and to crown all, Sir Robert put his own name down for £200 on the list of subscribers. 'The scheme,' says Mr. Balfour, 'seems now so impracticable that we may well wonder how any single person, let alone the representatives of a whole nation, could be found to support it. In order that religion and learning might flourish in America, the seeds of them were to be cast in

some rocky islets severed from America by nearly six hundred miles of stormy ocean. In order that the inhabitants of the mainland and of the West Indian colonies might equally benefit by the new university, it was to be placed in such a position that neither could conveniently reach it.'[1] Berkeley, who had recently married, left England for Rhode Island, where he stayed for about three years and wrote *Alciphron* (1732), in which he attacks the free-thinkers under the title of *Minute Philosophers*. Then on learning from Walpole that the promised money 'would most undoubtedly be paid as soon as suits public convenience' which would be never, he returned to England, and through the Queen's influence was made Bishop of Cloyne. In that diocese eighteen years of his life were spent. In the course of them he published the *Querist* (1735-1737), an *Essay on the Social State of Ireland* (1744), and, in the same year, *Siris*, which contains the bishop's famous recipe for the use of tar water followed by much philosophical disquisition. The remedy, which was afterwards praised by the poet Dyer in *The Fleece*, became instantly popular. 'We are now mad about the water,' Horace Walpole wrote; 'the book contains every subject from tar water to the Trinity; however, all the women read it, and understand it no more than if it were intelligible.' Editions of *Siris* followed each other in rapid succession, and it was translated into French and German. The work is that of an enthusiast, and it should be read not for its argument, but for its wealth of suggestiveness, and for what Mr. Balfour calls 'a certain quality of moral elevation and speculative diffidence alien both to the literature and the life of the eighteenth century.' Berkeley had himself the profoundest

[1] *Works of George Berkeley*. Edited by George Sampson. With introduction by the Rt. Hon. Arthur J. Balfour, M.P. Vol. I. p. xxxi (London, 1897).

faith in the panacea which he advocated. 'From my representing tar water,' he writes, 'as good for so many things, some, perhaps, many conclude it is good for nothing. But charity obligeth me to say what I know, and what I think, howsoever it may be taken. Men may conjecture and object as they please, but I appeal to time and experience.'

In his latter days Berkeley, feeling his health failing, desired to resign his bishopric and retire to Oxford, and there—while still bishop of Cloyne, for the king would not accept his resignation—the philosopher, who was blest, to use Shakespeare's fine epithet, with a 'tender-hefted nature,' passed away in 1753, leaving behind him one of the most fragrant of memories.

That Berkeley was a philosophical thinker from his earliest manhood is evident from his *Commonplace Book* published for the first time in the Clarendon Press edition of his works (vol. iv., pp. 419-502).

He delighted in recondite thought as much as most young men delight in action, and as a philosopher he is said to have commenced his studies with Locke, whose famous *Essay* appeared in 1690. Of Plato, too, Berkeley was an ardent admirer, and the spirit of Plato pervades his works. His *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* contains some intimations of the famous metaphysical theory which was developed a little later in the *Treatise on Human Knowledge*.

A good deal of foolish ridicule was excited by this book. Berkeley was supposed to maintain the absurd paradox that sensible things do not exist at all. The reader will remember how Dr. Johnson undertook to refute the postulate by striking his foot against a stone, while James Beattie (1735-1803), the poet and moral philosopher, in a volume for which he was rewarded with a pension of £200 a year, denounced Berkeley's philosophy as

'scandalously absurd.' 'If,' he writes, 'I were permitted to propose one clownish question, I would fain ask. . . . Where is the harm of my believing that if I were to fall down yonder precipice and break my neck, I should be no more a man of this world? My neck, Sir, may be an idea to you, but to me it is a reality, and a very important one too. Where is the harm of my believing that if in this severe weather I were to neglect to throw (what you call) the idea of a coat over the ideas of my shoulders, the idea of cold would produce the idea of such pain and disorder as might possibly terminate in my real death? What great offence shall I commit against God or man, church or state, philosophy or common sense if I continue to believe that material food will nourish me, though the idea of it will not, that the real sun will warm and enlighten me, though the liveliest idea of him will do neither; and that if I would obtain here peace of mind and self-approbation, I must not only form ideas of compassion, justice and generosity, but also really exert those virtues in external performance?'[1]

Beattie continues in this foolish strain to throw contempt upon a system which he had not taken the trouble to understand, and upon one of the sanest and noblest of English philosophers, and he does so without a thought that the absurdity is due to his own ignorance and not to the theory of Berkeley. The author of the *Minstrel* was an honest man and a respectable poet, but he prided himself too much on what he called common sense, and failed to see that in the search after truth other and even higher faculties may be also needed. Moreover, Berkeley, so far from being an enemy to common sense, endeavours, as he says, to vindicate it, although in so doing, he 'may per-

[1] *An Essay on Truth*, 2nd edit., p. 298. 1771.

haps be obliged to use some *ambages* and ways of speech not common.' A significant passage may be quoted from the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713) in illustration of his method and style so far indeed as a short extract can illustrate an argument sustained by a long course of reasoning.

'*Phil.* As I am no sceptic with regard to the nature of things, so neither am I as to their existence. That a thing should be really perceived by my senses, and at the same time not really exist is to me a plain contradiction; since I cannot prescind or abstract even in thought, the existence of a sensible thing from its being perceived. Wood, stones, fire, water, flesh, iron, and the like things, which I name and discourse of, are things that I know. And I should not have known them but that I perceived them by my senses; and things perceived by the senses are immediately perceived; and things immediately perceived are ideas; and ideas cannot exist without the mind; their existence therefore consists in being perceived; when therefore they are actually perceived there can be no doubt of their existence. . . . I might as well doubt of my own being, as of the being of those things I actually see and feel.

'*Hyl.* Not so fast, *Philonous*; you say you cannot conceive how sensible things should exist without the mind. Do you not?

'*Phil.* I do.

'*Hyl.* Supposing you were annihilated, cannot you conceive it possible that things perceivable by sense may still exist?

'*Phil.* I can; but then it must be in another mind. When I deny sensible things an existence out of the mind, I do not mean my mind in particular, but all minds. Now, it is plain they have an existence exterior to my mind; since I find them by experience to be independent of it. There is therefore some other mind wherein they exist, during the intervals between the times of my perceiving them; as likewise they did before my birth, and

would do after my supposed annihilation. And as the same is true with regard to all other finite created spirits, it necessarily follows there is an *omnipresent, eternal Mind*, which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner, and according to such rules, as He Himself hath ordained, and are by us termed the *Laws of Nature*.'

'Truth is the cry of all,' says Berkeley in the final paragraph of *Siris*, 'but the game of a few. Certainly, where it is the chief passion, it doth not give way to vulgar cares and views, nor is it contented with a little ardour, active perhaps to pursue, but not so fit to weigh and revise. He that would make a real progress in knowledge, must dedicate his age as well as youth, the latter growth as well as firstfruits at the altar of truth.'

Elsewhere in this famous treatise he writes:

'It cannot be denied that with respect to the universe of things we in this mortal state are like men educated in Plato's cave, looking on shadows with our backs turned to the light. But though our light be dim and our situation bad, yet if the best use be made of both, perhaps something may be seen. Proclus, in his commentary on the theology of Plato, observes there are two sorts of philosophers. The one placed body first in the order of beings, and made the faculty of thinking depend thereupon, supposing that the principles of all things are corporeal; that body most really or principally exists, and all other things in a secondary sense and by virtue of that. Others making all corporeal things to be dependent upon soul or mind, think this to exist in the first place, and primary senses and the being of bodies to be altogether derived from, and presuppose that of the mind.'

This was Berkeley's creed, and his great aim throughout is to prove the phenomenal nature of the things of sense, or in other words the non-existence of independent matter. He makes, he says, not the least question that the things we see and touch really exist, but what he does question is

the existence of matter apart from its perception to the mind. Hobbes said that the body accounted for the mind, and that matter was the deepest thing in the universe, while to Berkeley the only true reality consists in what is spiritual and eternal.

'The great idealist,' says an able writer, 'certainly never denied the existence of matter in the sense in which Johnson understood it. As the touched, the seen, the heard, the smelled, the tasted, he admitted and maintained its existence as readily and completely as the most illiterate and unsophisticated of mankind,' and he adds that the peculiar endowment for which Berkeley was distinguished 'far beyond his predecessors and contemporaries, and far beyond almost every philosopher who has succeeded him, was the eye he had *for facts*, and the singular pertinacity with which he refused to be dislodged from his hold upon them.'[1]

Pope's age produced a few great masters of style, and among them Berkeley holds an undisputed place. He succeeded, too, in the most difficult department of intellectual labour, since to express abstruse thought in language as beautiful as it is clear is the rarest of gifts.

'His works are beyond dispute the finest models of philosophic style since Cicero. Perhaps they surpass those of the orator, in the wonderful art by which the fullest light is thrown on the most minute and evanescent parts of the most subtle of human conceptions.'[2]

William Law (1686-1761).

William Law was born in 1686 at King's Cliffe in Northamptonshire, and entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, as a Sizar in 1705. He obtained a Fellowship, and received holy orders in 1711, but having made a speech offensive to the

[1] *Blackwood's Magazine*, June, 1842.

[2] Sir James Macintosh, *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

heads of houses, he was degraded. Law believed in the divine right of kings, and on the death of Queen Anne, declared his principles as a non-juror. In 1717 he published his first controversial work, *Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor*; Hoadly, the famous bishop, having, in his opponent's judgment, uttered lax and latitudinarian views with regard to the Church of which he was one of the chief pastors. These *Letters* have been highly praised for wit as well as for argument, and Dean Hook, writing of the Bangorian Controversy in his *Church Dictionary*, states that 'Law's *Letters* have never been answered and may, indeed, be regarded as unanswerable.' Law was also the most powerful assailant of Warburton's *Divine Legation*, which he opposed with a burning zeal that was not always wise. But as a controversialist he was an infinitely stronger man than his opponent, and unlike Warburton, he never debased controversy by scurrility, which the bishop generally found a more potent weapon than argument.

On the publication, in 1723, of Dr. Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, it was vigorously attacked by Law. In this masterly pamphlet, instead of attempting to refute the physician by showing that virtue is more profitable to the State than vice, and that, therefore, private vices are not public benefits, Law takes a higher ground, and asserts that morality is not a question of profit and loss, but of conscience. Mandeville maintains that man is a mere animal governed by his passions; his opponent, on the other hand, argues that man is created in the image of God, that virtue 'is a law to which even the divine nature is subject,' and that human nature is fitted to rise to the angels, while Mandeville would lower it to the brutes.

John Sterling, writing to F. D. Maurice of the first section of Law's remarks, says: 'I have never seen in our

language the elementary grounds of a rational ideal philosophy, as opposed to empiricism, stated with nearly the same clearness, simplicity, and force,' and it was at Sterling's suggestion that Maurice published a new edition of Law's argument with an introductory essay (1844).

The following passage from the *Remarks on the Fable of the Bees* will illustrate Law's method as a polemic:

'Deists and freethinkers are generally considered as unbelievers; but upon examination they will appear to be men of the most resigned and implicit faith in the world; they would believe *transubstantiation*, but that it implies a believing in God; for they never resign their reason, but when it is to yield to something that opposes salvation. For the Deist's creed has as many articles as the Christian's, and requires a much greater suspension of our reason to believe them. So that if to believe things upon no authority, or without any reason, be an argument of credulity, the freethinker will appear to be the most easy, credulous creature alive. In the first place, he is to believe almost all the same articles to be false which the Christian believes to be true.

'Now, it may easily be shown that it requires stronger acts of faith to believe these articles to be false, than to believe them to be true. For, taking faith to be an assent of the mind to some proposition, of which we have no certain knowledge, it will appear that the Deist's faith is much stronger, and has more of credulity in it, than the Christian's. For instance, the Christian believes the resurrection of the dead, because he finds it supported by such evidence and authority as cannot possibly be higher, supposing the thing was true; and he does no more violence to his reason in believing it, than in supposing that God may intend to do some things, which the reason of man cannot conceive how they will be effected.

'On the contrary, the Deist believes there will be no resurrection. And how great is his faith, for he pretends to no evidence or authority to support it; it is a pure

naked assent of his mind to what he does not know to be true, and of which nobody has, or can give him, any full assurance. So that the difference between a Christian and a Deist does not consist in this, that the one assents to things unknown, and the other does not; but in this, that the Christian assents to things unknown on account of evidence; the other assents to things unknown without any evidence at all. Which shows that the Christian is the rational believer and the Deist the blind bigot.'

It is probable that Law, like other writers on the orthodox side, did not sufficiently take into account the service rendered by the Deists in arousing a spirit of inquiry. Free-thinking is right thinking, and 'it was a result of the Deistic controversy, which went far to make up many evils in it, that in the end it widened and enlarged Christian thought.'[1]

The author's next and weakest work, *On the Unlawfulness of Stage Entertainments* (1726), is mentioned elsewhere.[2]

In the same year he published *Christian Perfection*, a profoundly earnest but puritanically narrow work, in which our earthly life is regarded simply as the road to another. 'There is nothing that deserves a serious thought,' he writes, 'but how to get out of the world and make it a right passage to our eternal state.' No man ever practised what he preached with more sincerity and persistency than William Law, but it can hardly be doubted that he narrowed the range of his influence by the views he expressed with regard to culture and to all human learning. He forgot that, without the logic, the wit, the irony, the singular force and lucidity of style displayed in his own

[1] *The English Church and its Bishops.* By Charles J. Abbey. Vol. i., p. 236.

[2] See p. 194.

writings, he would have lost the power as a religious teacher which he was so eager to exercise.

Literature *qua* literature Law regarded with contempt, and he is said to have looked upon the study even of Milton as waste of time. Yet his biographer states what seems likely enough, considering the fine qualities of Law's own writings, that 'no author was ever a favourite with him, unless he was a man of literary merit.'

In 1727, and probably before that date, Law held the position of tutor to Edward Gibbon, whose famous son, the historian, in his *Autobiography*, gives to him the high praise of having left in the family 'the reputation of a worthy and pious man, who believed all that he professed, and practised all that he enjoined.'

Law accompanied his pupil to Cambridge, and it is conjectured that during this residence at the university he wrote what Gibbon justly called his 'master work,' *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1729), the most impressive book of its class produced in the eighteenth century. The historian's father was a man of feeble character. He left Cambridge without a degree, and went on his travels, the tutor meanwhile remaining in the family house at Putney, where he seems to have gathered round him a number of disciples.

The *Serious Call* had an immediate and strong influence on many thoughtful men, and Law's book stimulated in no common measure the religious life of the country. John Wesley spoke of it as a treatise hardly to be excelled in the English tongue 'either for beauty of expression, or for justness and depth of thought.' Whitefield, Venn, and Thomas Scott, the commentator, acknowledged their indebtedness to the work, and Dr. Johnson, speaking of his youthful days, said: 'I became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for I did not much *think* against it; and this

lasted till I went to Oxford, when I took up Law's *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, expecting to find it a dull book (as such books generally are), but I found Law quite an overmatch for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest.' The first Lord Lyttelton, the historian and friend of Thomson, is said to have taken up the book one night at bed-time, and to have read it through before he went to bed; but, perhaps, the most unimpeachable evidence in its favour comes from the pen of Gibbon, who writes: 'Mr. Law's precepts are rigid, but they are founded on the Gospel. His satire is sharp, but it is drawn from the knowledge of human life, and many of his portraits are not unworthy of the pen of La Bruyère. If he finds a spark of piety in his reader's mind he will soon kindle it to a flame.'

Law's art as a portrait painter will be seen in the following sketch of Flavia:

'*Flavia* would be a miracle of piety if she was but half so careful of her soul as she is of her body. The rising of a *pimple* on her face, the sting of a gnat, will make her keep her room two or three days, and she thinks they are very rash people that do not take care of things in time. This makes her so over careful of her health that she never thinks she is well enough, and so over indulgent that she never can be really well. So that it costs her a great deal in sleeping draughts and waking draughts, in spirits for the head, in drops for the nerves, in cordials for the stomach, and in saffron for her tea.

'If you visit *Flavia* on the Sunday, you will always meet good company, you will know what is doing in the world, you will hear the last lampoon, be told who wrote it, and who is meant by every name that is in it. You will hear what plays were acted that week, which is the finest song in the opera, who was intolerable at the last assembly, and what games are most in fashion. *Flavia* thinks they are atheists who play at cards on the Sunday, but she will tell

you the nicety of all the games, what cards she held, how she played them, and the history of all that happened at play, as soon as she comes from church. If you would know who is rude and ill-natured, who is vain and foppish, who lives too high and who is in debt; if you would know what is the quarrel at a certain house, or who and who are in love; if you would know how late Belinda comes home at night, what clothes she has bought, how she loves compliments, and what a long story she told at such a place; if you would know how cross Lucius is to his wife, what ill-natured things he says to her, when nobody hears him; if you would know how they hate one another in their hearts though they appear so kind in public; you must visit *Flavia* on the Sunday. But still she has so great a regard for the holiness of the Sunday, that she has turned a poor old widow out of her house as a *profane wretch*, for having been found once mending her clothes on the Sunday night.'

Between the years 1733-37, owing to his acquaintance with the writings of the famous mystic, Jacob Boehme, Law became a mystic himself. The 'blessed Jacob' as he calls him exercised an influence which colours all his later writings and lasted till his death. In 1740 he retired to his native village and to solitude; but after a while two wealthy and devout ladies, one of them a widow, the other the historian's aunt, Miss Hester Gibbon, joined him in his retreat and devoted to charitable objects their labours and their fortunes. 'Out of a joint income of not less than three thousand pounds a year, only about three hundred pounds were spent upon the frugal expenses of the household and the simple personal wants of the three inhabitants. The whole of the remainder was spent upon the poor.[1] Report says, let us hope it may be scandal, that after

[1] *The Life and Opinions of the Rev. William Law, M.A.* By J. H. Overton, M.A. P. 243.

the master's death the love of earthly vanities revived in two of his pupils. His favourite niece had a new dress every month, and Miss Gibbon 'appeared resplendent in yellow stockings.' This is not the place to follow Law's self-denying career, neither are we concerned with the volumes which contain his later views. Admirably written though they be, these works do not belong to the field of literature. Law lived in vigour both of mind and body to a good old age, and died in 1761.

Joseph Butler (1692-1752).

Joseph Butler, whose *Sermons* (1726), and *Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736), are among the highest contributions to theology produced in the last century, called the imagination 'a forward, delusive faculty,' and he could have boasted that it was a faculty of which no trace is to be found in his works. Moreover, he is generally regarded as wholly destitute of style, and in a sense this is true, for Butler is so intent upon what he has to say that he cares little how he says it. His sense of beauty if he possessed it, was absorbed in a supreme allegiance to truth, and his life was that of a Christian philosopher intent upon one object. His sermons, preached at the Rolls Chapel, which contain the germ of his philosophy, are too closely packed with argument and too recondite in thought to fit them for pulpit discourses. The *Analogy*, which occupied seven years of Butler's life, is better known and more generally interesting. 'There is,' he says, 'a much more exact correspondence between the natural and the moral world than we are apt to take notice of.' His aim is to show that the difficulties which meet us in Revelation are to be found also in nature, that as our happiness or misery in this world largely depends upon conduct, so it is reasonable to suppose, apart from what Revelation teaches, that we are also in a state of

probation with regard to a future life. As youth is an education for mature age, so may the whole of our earthly life be an education for a future existence.

'And if we were not able at all to discern how or in what way the present life could be our preparation for another, this would be no objection against the credibility of its being so. For we do not discern how food and sleep contribute to the growth of the body; nor could have any thought that they would before we had experience. Nor do children at all think on the one hand that the sports and exercises, to which they are so much addicted, contribute to their health and growth; nor, on the other, of the necessity which there is for their being restrained in them; nor are they capable of understanding the use of many parts of discipline, which, nevertheless, they must be made to go through in order to qualify them for the business of mature age. Were we not able, then, to discover in what respects the present life could form us for a future one, yet nothing would be more supposable than that it might, in some respects or other, from the general analogy of Providence. And this, for aught I see, might reasonably be said, even though we should not take in the consideration of God's moral government over the world. But, take in this consideration, and consequently, that the character of virtue and piety is a necessary qualification for the future state, and then we may distinctly see how and in what respects the present life may be a preparation for it.'

Butler's style is uniform throughout, and if it have no other merit, may be praised for honesty. It is wholly free from the artifices of the rhetorician; if it is wanting in charm, it is never weak; if it is sometimes obscure, it must be remembered that the author does not write for readers who find it a trouble to think. The bishop's obscurity was not due to negligence. 'Confusion and perplexity in writing,' he says, 'is indeed without excuse; because anyone may, if he pleases, know whether he understands and sees

through what he is about; and it is unpardonable for a man to lay his thoughts before others when he is conscious that he himself does not know whereabouts he is, or how the matter before him stands. It is coming abroad in disorder, which he ought to be dissatisfied to find himself in at home.'

Butler weighed his thoughts rather than his words in an age when many distinguished writers were tempted to regard form as of more consequence than substance. It must be admitted, however, that if the ideal of fine literature be the expression of beautiful and richly suggestive thoughts in a style elevated by the imagination, and by a sense of rhythmical harmony, Bishop Butler's place is not among men of letters. His profound sense of the seriousness of life limited his range; but as a thinker, what he lost in versatility he probably gained in depth. The *Analogy* is a striking instance of a great work wholly without imagination, while full of the intellectual life which sustains the student's attention. There is not a dull page in the book, or one in which the author's meaning cannot be grasped by thoughtful readers. The work is full of weighty sayings on the power of conscience, the rule of right which a man has within him, the force of habit, the necessity of action in relation to belief, and the uselessness of passive impressions. It has been said that the defect of the eighteenth century theology 'was not in having too much good sense, but in having nothing besides,' and the straining after good sense, so prominent in Pope's age, affected alike, men of letters, philosophers, and theologians. The virtue was carried to excess and is conspicuous in Butler. He has his weaknesses both as a philosopher and a theologian, but the reader of the *Analogy* and of the three sermons on Human Nature, will be conscious that he is in the presence of a great mind.

William Warburton (1698-1779).

William Warburton, Pope's commentator, was born at Newark-upon-Trent in 1698, and died as Bishop of Gloucester in 1779. The main argument of his principal work, *The Divine Legation of Moses* (1738-41), is based upon the astounding paradox that the legation of Moses must have been divine because he never invoked the promises or threatenings of a future state. The book is remarkable for its arrogance and lack of 'sweet reasonableness.' It claims no attention from the student of English literature, neither would Warburton himself were it not for his association with Pope. Allusion has been already made to Crousaz's hostile criticism of the *Essay on Man* (1737) on the ground that it led to fatalism, and was destructive of the foundations of natural religion. Warburton, who had previously denounced the 'rank atheism' of the poem, now endeavoured to defend it, and how effectually he did so in Pope's judgment is seen in his grateful acknowledgment of the critic's labours. 'I know I meant just what you explain,' he wrote, 'but I did not explain my own meaning as well as you. You understand me as well as I do myself, but you express me better than I could express myself.'

Dr. Conyers Middleton's estimate of what Warburton had done for Pope is more accurate: 'You have evinced the orthodoxy of Mr. Pope's principles,' he says, 'but, like the old commentators on his *Homer*, will be thought, perhaps, in some places to have provided a meaning for him that he himself never dreamt of.'[1]

The poet and Warburton met for the first time in 1740, and the bookseller, Dodsley, who was present at the interview, was astonished at the compliments which Pope

[1] Middleton's *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. i., p. 402.

lavished on his apologist. Henceforth, until the poet's death, Warburton, who, according to Bishop Hurd, 'found an image of himself in his new acquaintance,' became his counsellor and supporter, and among other achievements added, as Ricardus Aristarchus, to the confusion of the *Dunciad*. Ultimately, as Pope's annotator, he produced much laborious and comparatively worthless criticism, and contrived by his immense fighting qualities as a critic and polemic to make a considerable noise in the world. One incident in the friendship of the poet and of the divine is worth recording. In 1741 Pope and Warburton were at Oxford together, and while there the Vice-Chancellor offered to confer on the poet the degree of D.C.L., and on Warburton that of D.D. Some hesitation, however, on the part of the university having occurred with regard to the latter, Pope wrote to his friend saying, 'As for mine I will die before I receive one, in an art I am ignorant of, at a place where there remains any scruple of bestowing one on you, in a science of which you are so great a master. In short I will be doctored with you, or not at all.'

Warburton's stupendous self-assertion concealed to some extent his heavy style and poverty of thought. His aim was to startle by paradoxes, since he could not convince by argument. No one could call an opponent names in the Billingsgate style more effectively, and every man who ventured to differ from him was either a knave or a fool. 'Warburton's stock argument,' it has been said, 'is a threat to cudgel anyone who disputes his opinion.' He was a laborious student, and the mass of work he accomplished exhibits his robust energy, but he has left nothing which lives in literature or in theology. He was, however, a man of various acquisitions, and won, for that reason, the praise of Dr. Johnson. 'The table is always full, sir. He brings things from the north and the south

and from every quarter. In his *Divine Legation* you are always entertained. He carries you round and round without carrying you forward to the point, but then you have no wish to be carried forward.'

Bentley's more concise description of Warburton's attainments deserves to be recorded. He was, he says, 'a man of monstrous appetite, but bad digestion.'

Warburton's *Shakespeare* appeared in 1747, his *Pope* in 1751. It cannot be said that either poet has cause to be grateful to his commentator. Of his *Shakespeare* a few words may be appropriately said here. In this pretentious and untrustworthy edition, Warburton accuses Theobald of plagiarism, treats him with contempt, and then uses his text to print from. In his Preface he declares that his own Notes 'take in the whole compass of Criticism,' and he professes to restore the poet's genuine Text. Yet, as the editors of the *Cambridge Shakespeare* observe, there is no trace, so far as they have discovered, 'of his having collated for himself either the earlier Folios or any of the Quartos.' Warburton professed to observe the severe canons of literal criticism, and this suggested the title to Thomas Edwards of a volume in which the critic's editorial pretensions are attacked with some humour and much justice.[1]

We may add that Bishop Hurd, Warburton's most intimate friend, edited his works in seven volumes (1788), and six years later, by way of preface to a new edition, published an *Account of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Author.*

[1] The first edition of Edwards's work was entitled *Supplement* to Mr. Warburton's edition of *Shakespeare*, 1747. The third edition (1750) was called *The Canons of Criticism and Glossary* by Thomas Edwards. Of this volume seven editions were published. Edwards, who was born in 1699, died in 1757.

INDEX OF MINOR POETS AND PROSE WRITERS.

JOHN ARMSTRONG (1709-1779), a Scotchman by birth, practised in London as a physician after some surgical experience in the navy. Believing any subject suitable for poetry, he wrote in blank verse, reminding one of Thomson, *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744), a poem containing some powerful passages, and many which are better fitted for a medical treatise than for poetry. An earlier and licentious poem *The Economy of Love*, which injured him in his profession, was 'revised and corrected by the author' in 1768.

If bulk were a sign of merit SIR RICHARD BLACKMORE (1650-1729) would not rank with the minor poets. He wrote several long and wearisome epics, his best work in Dr. Johnson's judgment being *The Creation* (1712), which was praised by Addison in the *Spectator* as 'one of the most useful and noble productions in our English verse,' a judgment the modern reader is not likely to endorse.

HENRY BROOKE (1706-1783), an Irishman, was the author of a poem entitled *Universal Beauty* (1735). Four years later he published *Gustavus Vasa*, a tragedy, which was not allowed to be acted, the sentiments being too liberal for the government. His *Fool of Quality* (1766) a novel in five volumes, delighted John Wesley, and in our day, Charles Kingsley, who praises its 'broad and genial

humanity.' Brooke was a follower of William Law, whose mysticism is to be seen in the story.

William Broome (1689-1745) is chiefly known from his association with Pope in the translation of the *Odyssey*, of which enough has been said elsewhere (p. 38). His name suggested the following epigram to Henley:

> 'Pope came off clean with Homer; but they say
> *Broome* went before and kindly swept the way.'

He entered holy orders, had two livings in Suffolk and one in Norfolk, and married a wealthy widow. His verses are mechanically correct, but are empty of poetry.

John Byrom (1691-1763), the friend and disciple of William Law, the author of the *Serious Call*, is best remembered for his system of shorthand. In a characteristic, copious, and not very attractive journal, he describes, for the consolation of his fellow mortals, how he makes resolutions and breaks them. Byrom wrote rhyme with ease and on subjects with which poetry has nothing to do. His most successful achievement was a pastoral, *Colin and Phœbe*, which appeared in the *Spectator* (Vol. viii., No. 603). It was written in honour of the daughter of Dr. Bentley, Master of Trinity, 'not,' it has been said, 'because he wished to win her affections, but because he desired to secure her father's interest for the Fellowship for which he was a candidate.' The plan was successful. The one verse of Byrom's that every one has read is the happy epigram:

> 'God bless the King!—I mean the faith's defender—
> God bless (no harm in blessing!) the Pretender!
> But who Pretender is, or who is King—
> God bless us all!—that's quite another thing.'

Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), a man of large attainments in science and divinity, was the favourite theo-

logian of Queen Caroline, who admired his latitudinarian views, and delighted in his conversation. His works, edited by Bishop Hoadly, were published in 1738 in four folio volumes. In 1704 he delivered the Boyle lectures on *The Being and Attributes of God*, and in 1705 *On Natural and Revealed Religion*. His *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712) was condemned by convocation. In defence of Sir Isaac Newton, Clarke had a controversy with Leibnitz, and having published the correspondence dedicated it to the Queen. His sermons, Mr. Leslie Stephen says, are 'for the most part not sermons at all, but lectures upon metaphysics.' In Addison's judgment Clarke was one of the most accurate, learned, and judicious writers the age had produced.

Elijah Fenton (1683-1730) wrote poems and *Mariamne*, a tragedy, in which, according to his friend Brome, 'great Sophocles revives and reappears.' It was acted with applause, and brought nearly one thousand pounds to its author. His name is now chiefly known as having assisted Pope in his translation of the *Odyssey*.

Richard Glover (1712-1785), the son of a London merchant, was himself a merchant of high reputation in the city. He also 'cultivated the Muses,' and his *Leonidas* (1737), an elaborate poem in blank verse, preferred by some critics of the day to *Paradise Lost*, passed through several editions and was praised by Fielding and by Lord Chatham. Power is visible in this epic, which displays also a large amount of knowledge, but the salt of genius is wanting, and the poem, despite many estimable qualities, is now forgotten. *Leonidas* was followed by *Boadicea* (1758), and *The Athenaid*, published after his death in 1788. Glover was a politician as well as a verseman. His party feeling probably inspired *Admiral Hosier's Ghost* (1739), a ballad still remembered and preserved in anthologies.

MATTHEW GREEN (1696-1737) is the author of *The Spleen*, an original and brightly written poem. *The Grotto*, printed but not published in 1732, is also marked by freshness of treatment. Green's poems, written in octosyllabic metre, were published after his death.

JAMES HAMMOND (1710-1742) produced many forlorn elegies on a lady who appears to have scorned him, and who lived in 'maiden meditation' for nearly forty years after the poet's death. His love is said to have affected his mind for a time. 'Sure Hammond has no right,' says Shenstone, 'to the least inventive merit. I do not think that there is a single thought in his elegies of any eminence that is not literally translated.'

NATHANIEL HOOKE (1690-1763), the author of a *Roman History*, is better known as the editor of *An Account of the conduct of the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough, from her first coming to Court in the year* 1710, *in a letter from herself to Lord —— in* 1742. The duchess is said to have dictated this letter from her bed, and to have been so eager for its completion that she insisted on Hooke's not leaving the house till he had finished it. He was munificently rewarded for his labour by a present of £5,000. It was Hooke, a zealous Roman Catholic, who, when Pope was dying, asked him if he should not send for a priest, and received the poet's hearty thanks for putting him in mind of it.

JOHN HUGHES (1677-1719) was the author of poems, an opera, a masque, several translations, and a tragedy, *The Siege of Damascus*, which was well received, and kept its place on the stage for some years. He died on the first night's performance of the play. Several articles in the *Tatler* and *Spectator* are from his pen. In 1715 he published an edition of Spenser in six volumes. Hughes received warm praise from Steele, and enjoyed also the friendship of Addison.

Conyers Middleton (1683-1750) is now chiefly known for an extravagantly eulogistic life of *Cicero* (1741), in which, as Macaulay observes, he 'resorted to the most disingenuous shifts, to unpardonable distortions and suppressions of facts.' The book is written in a forcible and lively style. A man of considerable learning, Middleton was a violent controversialist, who liked better to attack and to defend than to dwell in the serene atmosphere of literature or of practical divinity. He assailed the famous Richard Bentley with such rancour that he had to apologize and was fined £50 by the Court of King's Bench. Middleton was a doctor of divinity, but his controversial works, while never directly attacking the chief tenets of the religion he professed, lean far more to the side of the Deists than to the orthodox creed, and, indeed, it would not be uncharitable to class him among them. He appears, like Swift, to have chiefly regarded the Christian religion as an institution of service to the stability of the State. Of the *Miscellaneous Works* which were published after his death in five volumes, the most elaborate and the most provocative of disputation is *A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church through several successive centuries* (1749). Middleton was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and in 1734 was elected librarian of the University.

Richard Savage (1698-1743), whose fate is one of the most melancholy in the annals of versemen, lives in the admirable though neither impartial nor wholly accurate biography of Dr. Johnson. In 1719 he produced *Love in a Veil*, a comedy from the Spanish; and in 1723 his tragedy *Sir Thomas Overbury* was acted, but with little success. In the same year he published *The Bastard*, a poem which is said to have driven his mother out of society. *The Wanderer*, in five cantos, appeared in 1729, and was regarded

by the author as his masterpiece. It has some vigorous lines and several descriptive passages that are not conventional. Savage died in prison at Bristol, a city which recalls the equally painful story of Chatterton.

Lewis Theobald (1688-1744), the original hero of the *Dunciad*, was a dramatist and translator, but is chiefly known as the author of *Shakespeare Restored; or specimens of blunders committed or unamended in Pope's edition of the poet* (1726). This was followed two years later by *Proposals for Publishing Emendations and Remarks on Shakespeare*, and in 1733 by his edition of the dramatist in seven volumes. 'Theobald as an editor,' say the editors of the *Cambridge Shakespeare*, 'is incomparably superior to his predecessors and to his immediate successor Warburton, although the latter had the advantage of working on his materials. He was the first to recall a multitude of readings of the first Folio unquestionably right, but unnoticed by previous editors. Many most brilliant emendations . . . . are due to him.'

William Walsh (1663-1708) has chronologically little claim to be noticed here, for his poems were published before the beginning of the century, but he is to be remembered as the early friend and wise counsellor of Pope, and also as the author, I believe, of the only English sonnet between Milton's in 1658, and Gray's, on Richard West, in 1742.

Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea (1660-1720), published a volume of verse in 1713 under the title of *Miscellany Poems on Several Occasions, Written by a Lady.* The book contains a *Nocturnal Reverie*, which has some lines showing a close and faithful observation of rural sounds and sights, as for example:

> 'When the loosed horse, now as his pasture leads,
> Comes slowly grazing through the adjoining meads,

Whose stealing pace and lengthened shade we fear,
Till torn-up forage in his teeth we hear;
When nibbling sheep at large pursue their food,
And unmolested kine rechew the cud;
When curlews cry beneath the village walls,
And to her straggling brood the partridge calls.'

The *Nocturnal Reverie*, however, is an exception to the general character of Lady Winchelsea's poems, which consist chiefly of odes (including the inevitable Pindaric), fables, songs, affectionate addresses to her husband, poetical epistles, and a tragedy, *Aristomenes; or the Royal Shepherd*. The *Petition for an Absolute Retreat* is one of the best pieces in the volume. It displays great facility in versification, and a love of country delights.

Thomas Yalden (1670-1736), born in Exeter, and educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, entered into holy orders (1711), and was appointed lecturer of moral philosophy. 'Of his poems,' writes Dr. Johnson, 'many are of that irregular kind which, when he formed his poetical character, was supposed to be Pindaric.' Pindarics were indeed the bane of the age. Every minor poet, no matter however feeble his poetical wings might be, endeavoured to fly with Pindar. Like Gay, Yalden tried his skill as a writer of fables.

Note.

Mrs. Veal's Ghost (see pp. 186-187). A curious discovery, made by Mr. G. A. Aitken (see *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1895), makes it certain, he thinks, that 'the whole narrative is literally true.' He even hopes that the receipt for scouring Mrs. Veal's gown may some day be found. Mr. Aitken seems to infer that Defoe's other tales will also turn out to be true histories, but Defoe avers, with all the seriousness he expends on Mrs. Veal, that he witnessed the great Plague of London, which it is needless to say he did not.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

1667.	**Swift born.**
1672.	**Steele born.**
1672.	**Addison born.**
1674.	Milton died.
1688.	**Gay born.**
1688.	**Pope born.**
1688.	Bunyan died.
1690.	Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*
1694.	Voltaire born.
1699.	Racine died.
1700.	**Thomson born.**
1700.	**Dryden died.**
1700.	Fénelon's *Télémaque.*
1703.	John Wesley born.
1704.	Locke died.
1704.	**Addison's** *Campaign.*
1704.	**Swift's** *Tale of a Tub* and *Battle of the Books.*
1707.	Fielding born.
1709.	Johnson born.
1709.	**Pope's** *Pastorals.*
1709-1711.	*The Tatler.*
1710.	**Berkeley's** *Principles of Human Knowledge.*
1711.	**Pope's** *Essay on Criticism.*
1711-1712, and 1714.	*The Spectator.*
1711.	Hume born.
1712.	**Pope's** *Rape of the Lock.*
1712.	Rousseau born.

1713. **Addison's** *Cato.*
1713. Sterne born.
1714. **Mandeville's** *Fable of the Bees.*
1715. **Gay's** *Trivia.*
1715-1720. **Pope's** *Translation of Homer's Iliad.*
1715. Wycherley died.
1718. **Prior's** *Poems on Several Occasions* (folio).
1719-1720. **Defoe's** *Robinson Crusoe* (first part).
1719. **Addison died.**
1721. **Prior died.**
1721. Smollett born.
1723-1725. **Pope's** *Translation of Homer's Odyssey.*
1724. **Swift's** *Drapier's Letters.*
1724. Kant born.
1724. Klopstock born.
1725-1730. **Thomson's** *Seasons.*
1725. **Ramsay's** *Gentle Shepherd.*
1725. **Young's** *Universal Passion.*
1726. **Swift's** *Gulliver's Travels.*
1727. **Gay's** *Fables.*
1728. **Pope's** *Dunciad.*
1728. **Gay's** *Beggar's Opera.*
1728. Goldsmith born.
1729. **Law's** *Serious Call.*
1729. Burke born.
1729. Lessing born.
1729. **Steele died.**
1731. **Defoe died.**
1731. Cowper born.
1732-1735. **Pope's** *Moral Essays.*
1732-1734. **Pope's** *Essay on Man.*
1732. **Gay died.**
1733-1737. **Pope's** *Imitations of Horace.*
1735. **Pope's** *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.*
1736. **Butler's** *Analogy of Religion.*
1737. Gibbon born.
1738. Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature.*
1740. **Cibber's** *Apology for his Life.*

1740. Richardson's *Pamela.*
1742. Fielding's *Joseph Andrews.*
1742. Pope's *Dunciad* (fourth book added).
1742. Young's *Night Thoughts.*
1743. Blair's *Grave.*
1744. Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination.*
1744. Pope died.
1745. Swift died.
1748. Thomson died.
1748. Hume's *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding.*
1748. Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe.*
1748. Smollett's *Roderick Random.*
1749. Goethe born.
1749. Fielding's *Tom Jones.*

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF WRITERS.

ADDISON, JOSEPH 1672-1719
AKENSIDE, MARK 1721-1770
ARBUTHNOT, JOHN 1667-1735
ARMSTRONG, JOHN 1709-1779
ATTERBURY, FRANCIS 1662-1732
BENTLEY, RICHARD 1662-1742
BERKELEY, GEORGE 1685-1753
BINNING, LORD 1696-1732
BLACKMORE, SIR RICHARD 1650-1729
BLAIR, ROBERT 1699-1746
BOLINGBROKE, LORD 1678-1751
BOYLE, CHARLES 1676-1731
BROOKE, HENRY 1706-1783
BROOME, WILLIAM 1689-1745
BUTLER, JOSEPH 1692-1752
BYROM, JOHN 1691-1763
CHESTERFIELD, LORD 1694-1773
CIBBER, COLLEY 1671-1757
CLARKE, SAMUEL 1675-1729
COLLINS, ANTHONY 1676-1729
CRAWFORD, ROBERT . . . . . 1695 ?-1732
DEFOE, DANIEL 1661-1731
DENNIS, JOHN 1657-1733-4
DORSET, EARL OF. 1637-1705-6
DYER, JOHN . . . . . .1698 ?-1758
EDWARDS, THOMAS 1699-1757
FENTON, ELIJAH 1683-1730
GARTH, SIR SAMUEL 1660-1717-18
GAY, JOHN 1685-1732
GLOVER, RICHARD 1712-1785
GREEN, MATTHEW 1696-1737
HALIFAX, CHARLES MONTAGUE, EARL OF 1661-1715

HAMILTON, WILLIAM (OF BANGOUR) . . 1704-1754
HAMMOND, JAMES 1710-1742
HILL, AARON 1684-1749
HOOKE, NATHANIEL 1690-1763
HUGHES, JOHN 1677-1719
KING, ARCHBISHOP 1650-1729
LAW, WILLIAM 1686-1761
LILLO, GEORGE 1693-1739
LYTTELTON, GEORGE, LORD 1708-1773
MALLET, DAVID 1700-1765
MANDEVILLE, BERNARD DE . . . . . 1670?-1733
MIDDLETON, CONYERS. 1683-1750
MONTAGU, LADY MARY WORTLEY . . . 1689-1762
PARNELL, THOMAS 1679-1718
PHILIPS, AMBROSE 1671-1749
PHILIPS, JOHN 1676-1708
POPE, ALEXANDER 1688-1744
PRIOR, MATTHEW 1664-1721
RAMSAY, ALLAN 1686-1758
ROWE, NICHOLAS 1673-1718
SAVAGE, RICHARD 1698-1743
SHAFTESBURY, LORD 1671-1713
SHENSTONE, WILLIAM. 1714-1764
SOMERVILLE, WILLIAM 1692-1742
SPENCE, JOSEPH 1698-1768
STEELE, SIR RICHARD 1672-1729
SWIFT, JONATHAN 1667-1745
THEOBALD, LEWIS 1688-1744
THOMSON, JAMES 1700-1748
TICKELL, THOMAS 1686-1740
WALSH, WILLIAM. 1663-1708
WARBURTON, WILLIAM 1698-1779
WARDLAW, LADY 1677-1727
WATTS, ISAAC 1674-1748
WESLEY, CHARLES 1708-1788
WINCHELSEA, COUNTESS OF 1660-1720
YALDEN, THOMAS. 1670-1736
YOUNG, EDWARD 1684-1765

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